



Memory, Truth and Responsibility: Canada's Role in Confronting Antisemitism and Holocaust Distortion After October 7th

Annual Report of the Office of the Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance
and Combatting Antisemitism: October 16, 2023–March 31, 2025

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A message from Canada's Special Envoy for Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism



PHOTO 1

Deborah Lyons, Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism (2023-2025)

The post-October 7th world has been challenging and traumatic for Canada's Jewish community. Antisemitism, one of the world's oldest and most persistent hatreds, has reached levels that most Canadian Jews have never experienced before. It is with both a heavy heart and a resolute sense of duty that I present this year's report on the state of Holocaust remembrance and efforts to combat antisemitism in Canada.

The Jewish community is still reeling from the horrific Hamas terrorist attack of October 7th, 2023, which claimed more than 1,200 lives, saw hundreds taken hostage, including children, and sent shockwaves through Jewish communities worldwide. And as Canadian Jews were grieving the largest number of Jews murdered in one day since the Holocaust, including eight Canadians, they had to face an unprecedented wave of antisemitism in the forms of harassment, intimidation, threats of violence, and exclusion from work and academic life. These events have left many Canadian Jews feeling isolated, disappointed by the silence from leadership at all levels, and increasingly unsafe in their own country. Alarming, a study by the Jewish Medical Association of Ontario found that 31% of Jewish doctors are considering leaving the country due to the hostile antisemitic environment they face in the workplace¹.

Incidents of antisemitism in Canada have surged dramatically, with attacks on synagogues, schools, and Jewish-owned businesses becoming disturbingly common.

Synagogues, which should be places of sanctuary and peace, have been defaced, vandalized, and firebombed². Jewish students in schools have faced harassment, and many have felt compelled to hide their identity to avoid becoming targets.

Adding to this crisis is a sobering reality: there are fewer Canadian Holocaust survivors left to share their stories of survival. Their voices, which have long been the cornerstone of Holocaust education, are disappearing with each passing year. At the same time, a survey by the Association of Canadian Studies shows that Canadians between the ages of 18-24 have the highest rates of Holocaust skepticism³. Holocaust distortion, misinformation, and outright denial of historical truths threaten to erode the lessons we have learned from one of history's darkest chapters.

1 | Jim Wilson, "[Many Jewish Doctors Might Leave Canada amid Rising Antisemitism: Report](#)," Canadian HR Reporter, December 5, 2024.; Ari David Blaff, "[Jewish Doctors Consider Fleeing Canada amid Rising Antisemitism Rates](#)," National Post, December 4, 2024.

2 | Joel Ceausu, "[Montreal-Area Synagogue Firebombed for the Second Time since October 2023](#)," The Canadian Jewish News, December 18, 2024.

3 | Jack Jedwab, "[Understanding Genocide and Holocaust Skepticism in Canada](#)" (presentation, Metropolis Institute and the Association for Canadian Studies, Montreal, QC, November 2024).

Yet, even in the face of these challenges, I remain hopeful for Canada's future. Our country has a longstanding tradition of multiculturalism and a commitment to human rights. It is in this spirit that we must come together to address the alarming rise in antisemitism. Education at every level and age group is at the heart of this effort. The lessons of the Holocaust are more relevant than ever, reminding us of where unchecked hatred can lead. As Special Envoy, I have worked with educational institutions to ensure that Holocaust education remains a priority and that its lessons are taught not as distant history but as a lens for today and warning for tomorrow.

Law enforcement, community leaders, and policymakers must strengthen their efforts to protect Jewish communities, and existing tools must be used to prosecute those who perpetrate acts of hate. Ensuring the safety of Canadian Jews is not just a Jewish issue; it is a Canadian issue, integral to the fabric of our democracy.

My hope for Canada's future is one where no one feels unsafe participating in Jewish life, no child faces bullying for their faith or culture, and no family feels the need to conceal their identity. This vision will require commitment, solidarity, and action from all Canadians.

Let this report be both a record of the challenges we face and a call to action. Together, we can build a Canada where the Jewish community—and all communities—can thrive in safety and dignity.

"Everyone living in Canada has the right to feel safe in their communities, their neighbourhoods, their schools, and their places of worship. I thank the Special Envoy for her leadership and dedication in fighting antisemitism and discrimination in this country, and for her efforts to strengthen education and the duty to commemorate the Holocaust, both in Canada and internationally. Canada is strong because of its people and the very values that define us: diversity and inclusion. Combatting hate and promoting awareness and understanding about Jewish communities in Canada are essential to building a united future for all Canadians."»

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault
Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and
Minister responsible for Official Languages

The Annual report

The following annual report of the Special Envoy for Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism covers the period from Deborah Lyons' swearing in on October 16, 2023, until March 31, 2025.

The annual report from the Office of the Special Envoy (OSE) serves as a comprehensive overview of the work undertaken by the office over the past year and a half, showcasing its actions and achievements in alignment with its mandate.

The report highlights key initiatives and engagements that address the critical issues within the Special Envoy's portfolio. By providing detailed accounts of programs implemented, challenges navigated, and partnerships forged, the report underscores the office's commitment to driving progress and measurable impact. Additionally, it demonstrates how these actions align with and fulfill the mandate of the Special Envoy, ensuring accountability, transparency, and the sustained advancement of the office's objectives.

Finally, as per the mandate of the OSE, the report will include recommendations on how the Government of Canada can meaningfully combat antisemitism, domestically and internationally, and enhance Holocaust education, awareness and remembrance.

About the Office of the Special Envoy

History of the Role

The mandate of the Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism stems from the commitments of the 2000 Stockholm Declaration, which include international and domestic components. This renewed mandate encompasses the pledges our government made at the National Summit on Antisemitism (July 2021) and at the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism (October 2021).

The role of Special Envoy was established on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and authorized in an Order-In-Council by the Canadian Government, working in partnership with Global Affairs Canada and Canadian Heritage, among others. The Special Envoy reports to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for international responsibilities and the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities for domestic responsibilities. The Special Envoy may also provide advice to the Prime Minister and all Ministers, including the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Minister of National Defence, President of the Treasury Board, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and the Minister of Public Safety.



PHOTO 2

Deborah Lyons with her predecessor, Irwin Cotler

Canadian Heritage is vital in the fight against antisemitism and for Holocaust Remembrance as it is the federal department responsible for promoting Canadian identity, inclusion and diversity, Canadian Heritage spearheaded the creation and government-wide implementation of Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy (CARS) and the Canadian Action Plan on Combatting Hate (CAPCH).

In November 2020, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appointed the Honourable Irwin Cotler as Canada's first Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism. Professor Cotler served in this role until 2023. Prime Minister Trudeau announced the appointment of Deborah Lyons as the new Special Envoy on October 16, 2023, for a two-year mandate.

To show its commitment to combatting antisemitism and the importance of Holocaust remembrance, in Budget 2024 the government included further support to the OSE as it pledged \$7.3 million over six years, beginning in 2024–25, with \$1.1 million ongoing, to strengthen the Special Envoy's mandate.

The Mandate

Domestic:

The Special Envoy supports efforts to combat antisemitism and hatred domestically, interacts with Canadian institutions and stakeholders to promote Holocaust education, remembrance, and research, and advocates for the adoption and implementation of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism domestically. This includes providing guidance and advice to the Government of Canada to combat antisemitism and preserve Holocaust remembrance.

International:

The Special Envoy collaborates with international partners to strengthen and promote Holocaust education, remembrance, and research worldwide. The role also advocates for a broader international adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)'s working definition of antisemitism. The Special Envoy is Canada's Head of Delegation to the IHRA and combats antisemitism abroad by working with international partners such as other ambassadors and Special Envoys to combat antisemitism, through the Special Envoys and Coordinators Combatting Antisemitism (SECCA) forum.

Please click [here](#) for more information on the mandate of the OSE.

Hate and Memory: History of Antisemitism in Canada and the Imperative of Holocaust Remembrance

Antisemitism in Canada

Antisemitism in Canada has deep historical roots, manifesting in systemic discrimination and societal prejudice. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Jewish immigrants faced widespread exclusion and hostility. Universities implemented quotas to limit Jewish enrollment, particularly in professional degree programs. McGill University, for example, had a notorious quota system, ensuring Jewish students made up no more than 10% of certain programs well into the mid-20th century⁴.

4 | McGill University, "[The Development of Science at McGill](#)," McGill University - Bicentennial, July 2021.

Rates of antisemitism in Canada have been steadily on the rise since 2019 with the number of police-reported hate crimes increasing year over year. In 2021, there were 482 reported, compared to 331 in 2020, which was a 47% increase. The epidemic of antisemitism in Canada has only gotten worse in a post-October 7th world. According to Statistics Canada, the escalation in antisemitic hate crimes was particularly pronounced following the events of October 7, 2023. During October to December 2023, the average number of monthly hate crimes reported against the Jewish population was 148, compared to an average of 51 per month in the preceding nine months. Unfortunately, this trend has continued. The most frequently reported hate crimes in Canada 2023 were directed towards the Jewish community, accounting for 19% of the total number of hate crimes, despite Jewish Canadians making up approximately 1% of the Canadian population. Of the 1,284 religiously motivated hate crimes in 2023 in Canada (67 percent increase year over year), 900 (70%) targeted the Jewish community. There were more than four times as many antisemitic hate crimes compared to the second-most targeted religious minority⁵.

The Ongoing Need for Holocaust Remembrance

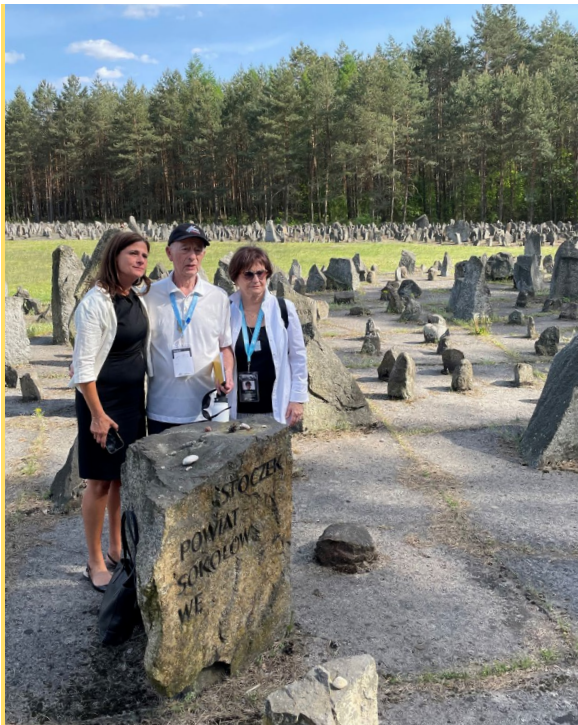


PHOTO 3

Deborah Lyons on the March of the Living in 2024 along with Michal Cotler-Wunsh and Canadian Holocaust Survivor Sol Nayman at Treblinka Extermination Camp

Holocaust denial and distortion persist as significant challenges in Canada, undermining historical truth and perpetuating antisemitism. As the survey from the Association of Canadian Studies revealed, 16% of Canadians between the ages of 18 and 24 agree that Jews exaggerate the Holocaust, and approximately half of those hold a negative opinion of Jews⁶.

A 2018 study put out by the Azrieli Foundation showed that 22% of millennials and Gen Z were unaware, or not sure if they have heard about the Holocaust⁷. In response to these issues, the Canadian government has taken steps to combat Holocaust denial and distortion. For example, in 2022, legislation was passed to criminalize the willful promotion of antisemitism by condoning, denying, or downplaying the Holocaust, which can be found in section 319 (2.1) of the Criminal Code. Despite these efforts, the persistence of Holocaust denial and distortion highlights the need for continued vigilance. Comprehensive education and proactive measures are essential to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and combatting the spread of false narratives in Canada.

It is heartening to see that across Canada seven provinces and one territory have committed to incorporating mandatory Holocaust education into their school curricula. While this alone is not enough to stop the spread of Holocaust misinformation and distortion, it is a vital first step towards ensuring Canadian youth have the educational foundation to recognize the dangers of antisemitism, resist the spread of hate, and uphold the values of truth, memory, and democratic responsibility.

5 | The Daily, [Police-reported hate crime in Canada](#), 2023, April 25, 2025 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada).

6 | Jack Jedwab, ["Understanding Genocide and Holocaust Skepticism in Canada"](#) (presentation, Metropolis Institute and the Association for Canadian Studies, Montreal, QC, November 2024).

7 | Claims Conference, ["New Survey by the Azrieli Foundation and the Claims Conference Finds Critical Gaps in Holocaust Knowledge,"](#) Claims Conference, January 25, 2023.

Mandate in Action

The table below outlines the high-level objectives of the OSE, organized by the relevant section of the mandate. For each objective, the table lists details of the specific actions undertaken to fulfill that portion of the mandate and the concrete outcomes that resulted from those efforts.

TABLE 1

DOMESTIC			
Objective	Mandate	Actions	Key Outcomes
Canadian leaders and institutions (both public and private), feel that they have the tools and guidance necessary to address antisemitism.	Providing guidance and advice to support the Government of Canada's efforts to combat antisemitism and hatred in Canada as part of Canada's broader Anti-Racism Strategy. Providing advice to relevant Ministers to inform the development of policies, legislative proposals, programs and regulations that address antisemitism and other issues that could adversely affect Jewish Canadians. Working with the Government of Canada, Canadian IHRA delegates and other domestic partners to advocate for a broader understanding, adoption and implementation of the IHRA definition of antisemitism in Canada. Working in collaboration with the Government of Canada, Canadian institutions and stakeholders to uphold the commitments of the 2000 Stockholm Declaration and the 2021 Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism.	Conducted meetings with law enforcement including Chiefs of Police Ongoing training on the Handbook to various government departments, the business community, and law enforcement. Conducted meetings with Hate Crimes Units within police departments Ongoing meetings with university presidents to discuss antisemitism on Canadian campuses and continuing to speak with organizations like U15, Universities Canada and the Network of Engaged Canadian Academics (NECA). Ongoing meetings with members of the business community addressing how they can help in the fight against antisemitism Member of Allies for a Strong Canada to encourage ally engagement across the country Worked with numerous NGOs and business leaders across the country to identify needed interventions to combat Antisemitism.	After 11 months of work, and over 150 consultations, on October 31, 2024, the OSE released the first ever Canadian Handbook on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism and the first to be released by a single nation. In their report from December 2024, the Justice Committee recommended that all Government of Canada Equity Diversity and Inclusion programs include the Jewish community, and that antisemitism training approved by the Special Envoy be provided to all government departments. In September 2024, the OSE facilitated hate crimes training sessions in Toronto and British Columbia led by a senior criminal law expert and representatives from the Canadian Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre. The program covered a comprehensive range of criminal, provincial, and municipal laws aimed at addressing hate-motivated activities. Changes were made to the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES), launched in October 2024 to include, for the first time, the option for Jewish employees to identify as both an ethnoreligious and religious group. By enabling Jews to self-identity, it makes the survey a more inclusive exercise and improves data on those who identify as Jewish and who work for Canada's largest employer- the Government of Canada. In March 2025, the OSE partnered with NECA to strengthen awareness and education on the IHRA definition on Canadian university campuses. Consulted with the Jewish Public Servants Network on the development of a course on antisemitism for federal public servants. The course, "Addressing Antisemitism in the Workplace" is now available through the Canada School of Public Service.

DOMESTIC			
Objective	Mandate	Actions	Key Outcomes
Holocaust remembrance is preserved across a range of Canadian public institutions.	Working in collaboration with the Government of Canada, Canadian institutions and stakeholders to advance efforts to promote Holocaust education, remembrance and research.	Ongoing participation on the advisory panel for the update of the National Holocaust Monument Continuing to provide advice for the newly created National Holocaust Remembrance Program, which was announced in Budget 2024. Provided advice to major museums about Holocaust exhibits Spoke at International Holocaust Remembrance Day commemorations in Toronto and Ottawa in January 2024 Supported the Canadian delegation to the IHRA, a group consisting of 10 experts from across the country in enhancing Holocaust remembrance through their networks and institutions	Budget 2024 included funding for the National Holocaust Remembrance Program (\$5 million over 5 years and ongoing amount of \$2 million annually) to support initiatives that seek to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and help improve Canadians' understanding and awareness of the Holocaust and contemporary antisemitism. Since the launch of the National Holocaust Remembrance program in November 2024, 13 projects have received funding to help improve Canadians' understanding and awareness of the Holocaust and contemporary antisemitism. There will be another \$1.4M to be awarded in the coming years. In September 2024, the OSE convened the first symposium of national Holocaust educators to discuss mandatory Holocaust education across Canada. With support of the OSE, Canada contributed to key IHRA resources such as the Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust and IHRA Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Persecution and Genocide of the Roma during the Nazi Era which were shared with leaders in the education field at the local and provincial levels. Members of the Canadian IHRA delegation drew on these resources, to advise provincial ministries of education and help shape Holocaust education curricula, launching in the fall of 2025.
Promoting the work of the Special Envoy's office in support of Holocaust remembrance and combatting antisemitism	Promoting Canada's domestic activities in support of Holocaust remembrance and combatting antisemitism on official government communication channels	Continuing to have a strong social media presence Wrote op-eds printed in national newspapers Appeared on various news outlets including the Canadian Jewish News podcast and CP24, CTV News and CBC Radio Published and distributed newsletters to keep stakeholders informed about the office Wrote and produced original audiovisual content to teach Canadians about antisemitism as well as allyship Transferred the office website from Global Affairs Canada to Canadian Heritage in December 2024 and added more resources	Launched in August 2024, the OSE along with Canadian Heritage produced a series of videos about the definition of antisemitism and Jewish life in Canada. The videos had a high engagement rate with over 200k views on the department's various social media accounts. A new website for the OSE was created that will now have resources for those seeking information on Holocaust Remembrance and Antisemitism. The website will also contain an archive of the OSE's newsletters. Op-eds were published in major news outlets including "To counter antisemitism, Canadians must first be able to recognize it" in the Globe and Mail (November 2024), and "Courageous leadership is needed to combat antisemitism in Canada" The National Post (July 2024), and "October 7 an opportunity to redouble our efforts against hate" (National Post, October 2024.)

DOMESTIC			
Objective	Mandate	Actions	Key Outcomes
		The Special Envoy participated in extensive speaking engagements across Canada. For a list of these engagements, please see the section entitled Public Engagements, Addresses & community meetings	
The OSE provides relevant advice to government officials that is reflective of the concerns of Canada's Jewish community.	Providing advice to relevant Ministers to inform the development of policies, legislative proposals, programs and regulations that address antisemitism and other issues that could adversely affect Jewish Canadians. Promoting public awareness and understanding about Jewish communities in Canada by participating in commemorations and public event and contributing to the reframing of public narratives about Jewish Canadian communities and combatting stereotypes; this includes highlighting diverse and intersectional Jewish Canadian identities and the ongoing contributions of Jewish Canadians to the building and progress of Canada. Proactively and regularly engaging on current and emerging challenges and issues to advance community-informed solutions, policies and actions with all types of diverse stakeholders in Canada, including, but not limited to, all of the various Jewish communities around the country; organizations representing different groups in Canadian society, including, but not limited to, organizations representing racialized and religious communities and Indigenous Peoples; other orders of government (provincial, territorial and municipal governments); and academia.	Conducted a cross-Canada tour to meet with Jewish communities across Canada immediately following the Special Envoy's appointment in October 2023 to confirm their concerns and priorities for follow up action needed from all levels of government. These included: municipal police forces, university and college presidents, Jewish post-secondary students, Jewish community groups, business leaders, faith leaders, politicians at the local, provincial and federal levels, and civil society organizations. These contacts were maintained for continuous consultation as series of issues emerged over time On December 2, 2024, the Special envoy testified at government and senate committee meetings studying antisemitism Testified at various committees including the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, on May 23, 2024, as well as the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights on December 9, 2024. Ongoing meetings with members of all levels of government from municipal leaders and mayors to the Prime Minister to discuss issues facing Canada's Jewish community Met with public servant unions to advocate on behalf of their Jewish members Ongoing meetings with various Jewish professional associations to discuss antisemitism within their professions including the Jewish Medical Association of Ontario and Jewish Public Servants Network Advocated strenuously to the provincial and federal governments as well as with several chiefs of police for the inclusion of several groups to be listed by Canada terror organizations.	In July 2024, the OSE and the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) signed a memorandum of Understanding to collaborate on responses to criminal victimization from antisemitism and to advocate for government policies and actions that strengthen inclusion and public safety. After months of advocacy work, on October 15, 2024, Samidoun was listed by Public Safety Canada as a terrorist entity in Canada. On December 2, 2024, the Minister of Public Safety announce that government listed the Houthis as a terrorist entity under the criminal On November 13, 2024, the video explaining antisemitism was released on the Canadian Heritage twitter account. This video outlined and debunked some classic antisemitic tropes. In December 2025, the Government of Canada announced that it will be convening a National Forum on Combatting Antisemitism which was held on March 6, 2025. The OSE, who, after hearing from the Jewish community has consistently called for more leadership at every level, presented at the forum and provided key takeaways on how to fight antisemitism in Canada. Several key community organizations such as the Jewish Federations, CIJA and NECA, feel well-connected to the OSE and able to collaborate on a vast array of issues and urgencies as they arise.

DOMESTIC			
Objective	Mandate	Actions	Key Outcomes
		Constant collaboration with CIJA, Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre, B'nai Brith Canada, Alliance of Canadians Combatting Antisemitism and Hillel. The Special Envoy has been actively calling on all levels of government to implement "Bubble Legislation" to keep places of worship free from protests and intimidation. The OSE is continuing to work with Treasury Board Secretariat to help create a mechanism to ensure that recipients of government funding adhere to Canada's anti-racism strategy as well as allow public servants to self-identify including their ethnoreligious background on surveys.	

TABLE 2

INTERNATIONAL			
Objective	Mandate	Actions	Key Outcomes
Provide leadership and ensure Canada's active participation internationally, including collaboration with IHRA member states, to ensure Holocaust remembrance and the fight against antisemitism.	Representing Canada at bi-yearly International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) plenary sessions and relevant ad-hoc IHRA meetings and engaging with the organization's Permanent Office, Chair and international counterparts. Working with other IHRA member states on Holocaust remembrance and antisemitism to advance existing efforts to strengthen and promote Holocaust education, remembrance, and research worldwide, and to uphold the commitments of the 2000 Stockholm Declaration and the 2021 Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism. Engaging bilaterally and within the multilateral system, including with Canada's Permanent Delegations to the United Nations, partners at the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Organization of American States, and others, to strengthen global efforts to counter antisemitism and preserve Holocaust remembrance, representing Canada, where required by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at selected international high-level events.	Led the Canadian delegation at IHRA plenary sessions in Zagreb (November 2023), Glasgow (June 2024) and London (December 2024), advocating for stronger global commitments to combat antisemitism and promote Holocaust education. Delivered interventions at IHRA meetings advocating for stronger international coordination on Holocaust education, including best practices for embedding the IHRA Working Definition into national frameworks. Met and collaborated with several Ambassadors and diplomatic representatives in Ottawa including Israel (October 2023), United States (December 2023), Ukraine (February 2024), Germany (February and October 2024), Aga Khan Development Network (March 2024), European Union (March 2024), Argentina (March 2024), Hungary (June 2024), France (June 2024), Poland (October 2024), Romania (November 2024) and Italy (January 2025). Met with the European Union, the Belgian Delegation to IHRA in April 2024, and representatives of the Government of Belgium in Brussels to discuss data collection, digital antisemitism, national security, and public education. Participated in the International March of the Living in Poland with Canadian Holocaust survivors and engaged in discussions with key Polish institutions such as the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation and the POLIN Museum (May 2024). Represented Canada at significant international fora such as the United Nations (March 2024, New York) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Conference on Addressing Antisemitism (April 2024, Malta).	Presented the Canadian Handbook on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism sharing insights and best practices with over 30 Canadian diplomatic offices abroad in October 2024, leading to increased diplomacy efforts in promoting Canada's leadership in combatting antisemitism. In March of 2025, Special Envoy Lyons and her office, in collaboration with Canada's Embassy to Lithuania, presented the Canadian Handbook on the IHRA antisemitism definition to the Lithuanian Parliament, including civil society and the diplomatic community in Lithuania, providing insights and recommendations on combatting antisemitism by promoting Canada's efforts. Following a presentation on the Canadian Handbook on the IHRA definition of antisemitism in December 2024 at the London IHRA plenary meeting, several delegations including Italy, Portugal and Australia have taken steps to produce similar handbooks for their countries, modelled after Canada's. In December 2024, the Toronto Holocaust Museum presented at the IHRA's Museum and Memorials Working Group on Toronto's approach to preserving Holocaust remembrance, solidifying Canada's influence within IHRA, resulting in increased policy commitments from member states. In May 2024, Special Envoy Lyons co-hosted The Austrian Holocaust Memorial Award (AHMA) in Montreal, alongside Austria's Ambassador to Canada, and Austria's Honorary Consul General. Two Canadian Holocaust experts received awards, strengthening diplomatic partnerships with Austria and Belgium, leading to the formal recognition of Canadian contributions to Holocaust research and education. Successfully included antisemitism and Holocaust remembrance in the agenda for high-level visits, such as the Visit of Slovakia's President to Canada in January 2024. Special Envoy Lyons met with Slovakia's first gentleman, Juraj Rizman, reinforcing diplomatic ties and highlighting the importance of combatting antisemitism at levels, domestically and internationally.

INTERNATIONAL			
Objective	Mandate	Actions	Key Outcomes
			The international insights gained through exchanges with Belgian interlocutors in April 2024 helped inform domestic Canadian policy, such as the need for municipal-provincial-federal coordination on combatting antisemitism. Elevated Canada's leadership in Holocaust remembrance, strengthened ties between Canadian and U.S. Jewish communities, and highlighted the importance of North American collaboration on combatting antisemitism through a keynote Speech at the March of the Living Yom HaShoah ceremony in Krakow, Poland in May 2024 to over 300 North American participants. Strengthened Canada's multilateral collaboration with the OSCE, by highlighting Canadian efforts on combatting online hate and antisemitism through Special Envoy Lyons' participation as a panelist in a session with international counterparts entitled: Countering Anti-Semitism: From the cyber sphere to the real world in Malta, in April 2024. Developed valuable relationships with senior officials at the United Nations working on antisemitism and Holocaust remembrance, such as Miguel Moratinos, the UN's focal point on antisemitism. Special Envoy Lyons' relationship building allowed Canada to help shape, inform and contribute to the UN's Action Plan to Enhance Monitoring and Response to Antisemitism, published in January 2025.

INTERNATIONAL			
Objective	Mandate	Actions	Key Outcomes
Promote and coordinate broader global adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism through collaborative international partnerships.	Working in collaboration with IHRA members, other Special Envoys to the organization, ambassadors, and other international partners to advocate for a broader understanding, adoption, and implementation of the IHRA definition of antisemitism and coordinate action internationally.	Canada's Special Envoy is a leading member of an international coalition of Special Envoys combatting antisemitism, the Special Envoys and Coordinators on Combatting Antisemitism (SECCA) network, working through IHRA and other multilateral platforms. Hosted several counterparts during their visits to Canada such as Israel's Special Envoy on Combatting Antisemitism (November 2023) and the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism (December 2023 and November 2024). Met with international counterparts abroad, Italy (October 2023), U.S. (March 2024), OSCE (March 2024), European Union (April 2024), Argentina (July 2024), U.K. (December 2024) and Australia (January 2025) and advocated for broader adoption and use of the IHRA definition of antisemitism. Engaged with international parliamentarians and elected officials from Israel (December 2023), United States (March 2024), the U.K. (June 2024), and Australia (November 2024) to highlight Canada's efforts to combat antisemitism and the importance of the IHRA antisemitism definition.	The Handbook was translated to Lithuanian in March 2025 and is in the process of being translated to Italian at the time of this report's publication. These efforts demonstrate Canadian leadership in promoting the IHRA definition of antisemitism internationally. The Office of the Special Envoy helped develop the Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism, led by the U.S. Special Envoy for Monitoring Antisemitism and released in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July 2024. Canada's advocacy efforts contributed to the guidelines' endorsement by 38 countries and 4 international organizations (at the time of this report's publication). Following Canadian interventions during the IHRA plenary meeting in Zagreb in November 2023, Canada's Special Envoy was invited to be a member of an informal working group of National Coordinators and Special Envoys on combating online antisemitism which meets quarterly. Canadian insights and reflections on combatting online antisemitism were valued by working group members, allowing for the sharing, exchanging and contrasting of Canadian initiatives with other countries. The Office of the Special Envoy supported the drafting and publication of several joint statements with international counterparts re-affirming Canada's commitment to combatting antisemitism and promoting the IHRA antisemitism definition. These include a joint statement with 32 Special Envoys and Coordinators on Combatting Antisemitism (November 2023), a joint statement with Israel's Special Envoy (December 2023), the Best Practices for the Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art (May 2024), and a joint statement by National Coordinators and Special Envoys on Combating Antisemitism in regard to the Events in Amsterdam on November 7th (November 2024). Canadian efforts to combat antisemitism, such as the publication of Canada's Handbook on the IHRA Antisemitism definition, were recognized by counterparts in the U.K. In March 2025, Canada joined an agreement for cooperation on combating antisemitism between the offices of the Special Envoys for the UK, Canada and Australia focusing on specific areas, including universities, security and policing.

INTERNATIONAL			
Objective	Mandate	Actions	Key Outcomes
Build coalitions and cooperative networks that extend Canada's impact, ensuring effective action against antisemitism and other forms of hate on a global scale.	Engaging with international organizations and civil society organizations in other countries, in coordination with Canada's missions to those countries, to advocate in support of human rights and against antisemitism and other forms of exclusion and hate, and coordinate on strategies for collective action to counter these. Working in collaboration with other Special Envoys and representatives to promote inclusion and respect for diversity as part of Canada's protection of human rights.	Continuing to actively engage with social media platforms (Meta, X, TikTok) to combat online antisemitism, Holocaust denial, and digital hate speech. Engaged with international civil society groups such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Centre for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM), Fight Online Antisemitism (FAO), American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the World Jewish Congress (WJC) to collaborate to identify strategies for addressing antisemitism online and in person. Met with the families of the hostages taken during the October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel and reiterated Canada's support for the unconditional release of all hostages. Meetings occurred in October 2023, March 2024 and April 2024. Represented Canada at various international conferences, including the International Forum on Holocaust Memory and Learning in an Age of Manipulated Information, in Poland in January 2025.	The Office of the Special Envoy participated in Meta's Policy Forum, in May 2024, and helped develop their new strategy addressing the use of "Zionist" as a proxy for hate speech. Strengthened collaboration with international civil society organizations on combatting digital antisemitism, such as incorporating CCDH's research and policy recommendations into the OSE's engagement with the Interparliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Antisemitism and the Special Envoys and Coordinators on Combatting Antisemitism (SECCA) network. Effective coordination between CAM and the Office of the Special Envoy enabled two Canadian municipal leaders (the mayors of Vaughan and Markham) to participate in a conference on municipal efforts to combat antisemitism, in November 2024 in California, reinforcing the importance of all levels of government in the fight against antisemitism. In October 2024, the OSE and the ADL successfully coordinated a meeting of the J7, an international task force against antisemitism, comprising Jewish organizations in Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. Special Envoys and Coordinators on antisemitism, through support from the Office of Canada's Special Envoy, joined representatives from civil society from each country came together to identify how the group can be used to advance the fight against antisemitism, through government-civil society joint efforts.
Showcase Canada's international commitment to Holocaust remembrance and antisemitism prevention through coordinated, high-impact communications.	Promoting Canada's international activities in support of Holocaust remembrance and combatting antisemitism, including in the IHRA communication products and on official government communication channels (for example, official social media profiles and Government of Canada webpages), via a joint communications framework led by Global Affairs Canada and supported by Canadian Heritage	Launched the Canadian Handbook on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism (October 31, 2024), widely disseminating it through official government websites, IHRA communication platforms, and international diplomatic channels. Provided essays representing the Canadian perspective on addressing rising antisemitism in Tel-Aviv University's report in February 2024 and March 2025. Integrated digital antisemitism as a key thematic focus in Canada's international outreach, advocating for legislative measures and public awareness campaigns on the proliferation of Holocaust denial online.	The promotion of the IHRA Handbook has established it as an international reference point—most notably in January 2025 when partners such as the Commissioner to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism at the Organization of American States adopted it—enhancing the visibility of Canada's role in global Holocaust remembrance efforts. Strengthened Canada's contribution to IHRA's global communication efforts, ensuring Canadian-led initiatives were featured in IHRA reports and public-facing materials, such as the IHRA website.

INTERNATIONAL			
Objective	Mandate	Actions	Key Outcomes
		Supported Canada's Prime Minister during his visit to Poland for the 80th commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau in January 2025 by accompanying the Prime Minister, meeting with Canadian Holocaust Survivors, and participating in official events.	Increased public engagement on Holocaust remembrance and antisemitism prevention, reaching broader audiences through targeted messaging campaigns by Global Affairs Canada, Canadian Heritage, and partners in academia such as the Irwin Cotler Institute for Democracy, Human Rights, and Justice at Tel-Aviv University. Reinforced Canada's leadership in addressing antisemitism, and Holocaust denial by supporting communications for the Prime Minister, the Privy Council Office (PCO), the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, and the Minister of Canadian Culture and Identity.

Spotlight on Impact: Highlights on Some of the Work of the Office of the Special Envoy

The First 100 Days: Listening and Bearing Witness

Following her appointment as Special Envoy on October 16, and particularly given the aftermath of October 7th, Special Envoy Lyons prioritized meeting with Jewish communities across Canada. She travelled to Winnipeg, Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Moncton, and Halifax, where she met with representatives from a broad range of Jewish life, as well as law enforcement officials, provincial and municipal governments, school boards, university presidents and many others.

After completing the cross-Canada tour, Special Envoy Lyons travelled to Zagreb, Croatia in her role as head of the Canadian Delegation to the IHRA from November 27-30, 2023. Together with members from 35 countries and nine international partners, they tackled issues dealing with antisemitism, Holocaust denialism and distortion.

Special Envoy Lyons also visited Israel from December 2-5, 2023, to bear witness to the ruins of the devastated Kibbutz Be'eri, including the home of her friend and prominent Israeli Canadian peace activist Vivian Silver, of blessed memory, who was one of the Canadian victims of the brutal carnage on October 7th. While in Israel, Special Envoy Lyons met with Isaac Herzog, Israel's president, and other leaders to share Canada's efforts to combat antisemitism.

Upon her return to Canada, the Special Envoy met with two visiting delegations of families whose loved ones were still hostages in Gaza. Special Envoy Lyons heard their heartbreaking stories and pledged that Canada would do all it could to support the return of their family members.

The Canadian Handbook on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism

The OSE was very proud to release the Government of Canada's *Canadian Handbook on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism* (The Handbook) on October 31, 2024.

The publication of the Handbook fulfills a 2022 commitment by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for the Government of Canada to develop a guide on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism, which the government adopted in 2019 as part of Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy. The Handbook reflects 11 months of dedicated effort and consultation with over 150 individuals and groups across the country, including experts on antisemitism, scholars, community leaders, legal professionals and advocacy organizations. This collaborative process ensured that the Handbook is both comprehensive and reflective of Canada's diverse perspectives. Grounded in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's globally recognized definition, the Handbook provides clear, actionable guidance on identifying and understanding antisemitic incidents and rhetoric.

The Handbook is a vital tool to combatting antisemitism in all of the office's key pillars. Without the ability to recognize antisemitism in its many forms, efforts to combat it remain ineffective.

Recognizing that combating antisemitism requires both awareness and action, the Handbook provides practical recommendations for implementing the IHRA definition effectively across several critical sectors.

Education: Strategies to educate students and faculty about antisemitism and promote inclusive environments.

Law Enforcement: Guidelines on identifying and addressing antisemitic hate crimes and incidents.

Government: Recommendations to ensure policies actively counter antisemitism and support Jewish communities.

Workplace: Tools for creating workplaces free of antisemitic discrimination and harassment.

Civil Society: Practical guidance for organizations and individuals to recognize and combat antisemitism in their communities.

For more information and to access the *Canadian Handbook on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism*, please visit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/canada-holocaust/handbook-definition-antisemitism.html>.



PHOTO 4

Deborah Lyons holding a copy of the Canadian Handbook on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

Budget 2024

To confront hate in all its forms, Budget 2024 provided \$273.6 million over six years, starting in 2024-25, with \$29.3 million ongoing, for Canada's Action Plan on Combatting Hate to support community outreach and law enforcement reform, tackle the rise in hate crimes, enhance community security, counter radicalization, and increase support for victims.

This includes:

National Holocaust Remembrance Program (NHRP): \$5 million over five years, starting in 2024-25, and \$2 million per year ongoing for a permanent program for Holocaust remembrance and education. The new program supports projects that seek to preserve the memory of the Holocaust, provide a better understanding of Canadians' knowledge (and gaps) of the Holocaust, and create new tools to engage Canadians.

Support for the Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism: \$7.3 million over six years, beginning in 2024-25, with \$1.1 million ongoing, to strengthen the Special Envoy's mandate.

Training for Law Enforcement: \$26.8M over four years to Public Safety Canada to improve police training on responding to hate crimes, including antisemitic incidents.

Funding for the Montreal Holocaust Museum: \$5M over two years, starting in 2024-25, to support the construction of the new Montreal Holocaust Museum. This builds on a previous investment of \$20M to support this project and is part of a suite of generational investments to support the redevelopment and renewal of Canada's major Holocaust education centres including investments for the Toronto Holocaust Museum and to support the construction of a new Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver, which will include an expanded home for the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.

Enhancing Hate Crime Data Collection: \$10M over five years, starting in 2024-25, to Statistics Canada to improve the collection, analysis, and dissemination of hate crime statistics, helping track trends in antisemitism.

Increased Funding for the Security Infrastructure Program: Provides an additional \$15M over three years, beginning in 2024-25, to support enhanced security measures for at-risk community organizations, including synagogues, schools, and cultural centers.

Launching a review to renew and enhance Canada's National Holocaust Monument: Using existing resources, the federal government will work with Holocaust scholars, educational experts, and the local community to increase the Monument's visibility and engagement in Ottawa, Ontario, and with Canadians across the country.

Education

Holocaust education is a cornerstone in fostering understanding, tolerance, and resilience against hatred among Canadian youth. As the memory of the Holocaust moves further into history, the urgency to educate younger generations grows ever more critical. By understanding the horrors of antisemitism and the devastating consequences of unchecked prejudice, our youth can develop the empathy and awareness necessary to build a more inclusive society. In Canada, where diversity is a fundamental value, equipping students with knowledge of the Holocaust serves not only as a lesson in the past but also as a safeguard for the future, ensuring that the principles of justice, human rights, and mutual respect remain central to our national identity.

And, as mentioned above, Canadian youth have the highest rates of Holocaust skepticism in the country. And those who believe the Jewish community is exaggerating about the Holocaust are also more likely to have a negative view on the Jewish community. Therefore, it is imperative that more work be done to have effective Holocaust education from coast to coast.

Holocaust Educators Symposium



PHOTO 5

Deborah Lyons and Holocaust Educators gathered in Toronto for a symposium convened by the Office of the Special Envoy

In late September 2024, the OSE convened the first ever national symposium for Canada's top Holocaust educators. This accomplished and experienced group discussed the implementation of the enhanced Holocaust curriculum beginning in fall 2025 as mandated by most provinces. The educators also discussed the need for contemporary antisemitism education in schools that is separate from Holocaust education. The OSE intends to convene another of these meetings soon in addition to meetings with provincial ministers of education to discuss how they can do more to ensure that Canadian schools are free of antisemitism.

The National Holocaust Remembrance Program

In Budget 2024, the government announced the creation of a new National Holocaust Remembrance Program. The program would provide \$5M over five years starting in 2024-2025 and \$2M ongoing to support initiatives that seek to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and help improve Canadians' understanding and awareness of the Holocaust and contemporary antisemitism.

The OSE played a key role in construction of the program and regularly consulted with the program team following the November 2024 call for proposals to ensure that funding went to projects that furthered the goal of keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive and helping Canadians better understand the ways antisemitism still affects Canada today.

By the end of March 2025, 13 projects received funding including:

TABLE 3

Organization	Project Title
Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies	Empowering Change: Holocaust Education for a New Generation
Toronto Holocaust Museum	Shifting the Narrative: A Campaign to Combat Holocaust Misinformation and Promote Media Literacy
Jewish Federation of Victoria and Vancouver Island Society	Holocaust and Antisemitism Education and Awareness Training for Victoria BC and Area
Montreal Holocaust Museum/Musée de l'holocauste de Montréal	Projet de recherche en éducation sur l'Holocauste et l'antisémitisme
Canadian Society for Yad Vashem	Providing Expert Resources in Holocaust Education, Research and Remembrance
Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society for Education and Remembrance	Remnants of the Shoah: Engaging the Holocaust Online Through Digital Learning Resources ("the Project")
Jewish Federation of Ottawa	Holocaust Survivor Testimony Booklets
Hillel Ontario	The SHARE Fellowship
University of Victoria	Developing Trauma-Informed Teaching Resources and Outreach Activities for Arts-Based Survivor Testimonies
Société bénévole de propagation de l'Hébreu	Young Champions of Light over Darkness
Jewish Russian Speaking Community of Toronto	Echoes of Survival: Voices of Soviet Holocaust Survivors
National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, Toronto Section	Creating a Dialogue about Israel and Antisemitism: The Power of Small Conversations
Atlantic Canada Holocaust Education Foundation	Holocaust Education Exhibit

Law Enforcement

Working with the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime

In July 2024, the OSE and the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) signed a memorandum of Understanding to collaborate on responses to criminal victimization from antisemitism and to advocate for government policies and actions that strengthen inclusion and public safety.

Under this agreement:

- The Special Envoy's office will make referrals and share information and best practices to support Jewish communities negatively impacted by federal policies, services, or programs.
- The OFOVC will accept referrals and enhance awareness of existing federal victim programs and services, ensuring Jewish victims of crime can access the resources they need.

Hate Crime Training

In September 2024, the OSE facilitated hate crimes training sessions in both Toronto and British Columbia, bringing together Mark Sandler, a senior criminal law expert, and the Canadian Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre. The Toronto session, held at the Toronto Police College, brought together members from various hate crimes units, including the Toronto Police Service, Hamilton, Halton, and York, as well as several Crown prosecutors. The session focused on a wide range of criminal, provincial, and municipal laws to address hate-motivated activities, with interactive case scenario exercises. Key topics covered included the challenges of policing protests, demonstrations, and occupations, Charter issues, terrorism offences, and the implications of entities being listed as terrorist groups. A separate training was provided in Vancouver by the same providers for the BC RCMP and Crown attorneys in the Greater Vancouver area. The OSE continues to promote this important training to law enforcement across Canada.

National Forum on Combatting Antisemitism

On March 6, 2025, the Government of Canada convened the National Forum on Combatting Antisemitism in Ottawa, uniting federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal leaders with law enforcement, prosecutors, and Jewish community representatives. This gathering of leaders addressed the growing public safety threat posed by antisemitism and resulted in an action plan commitment.

Speaking at the Forum, Special Envoy Lyons, emphasized five guiding principles for national efforts:

1. Clarity over hesitation: The time for confusion is over—actionable solutions exist and must be implemented now.
2. Embracing the IHRA definition: It is the established national standard, and its effective application is essential across institutions.
3. Using practical tools: The IHRA Handbook equips police, educators, and policymakers to recognize and respond to antisemitism.
4. Countering misinformation: Especially regarding Zionism and freedom of expression, ensuring public understanding is key.
5. Demonstrating courage: Combating antisemitism requires collective leadership and resolve from all sectors of society.



PHOTO 6

Deborah Lyons at the National Forum on Combatting Antisemitism

Following the forum, the Government of Canada made 12 commitments⁸, including:

- Working with partners across all orders of government to increase awareness of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition and all elements contained within the Canadian Handbook on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism.
- Ensuring that transfer payments are designed, delivered and managed with integrity, accountability and transparency, and that recipients of government funding respect the values underlying the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- Delivering \$1.4 million in new funding for 7 new initiatives through the National Holocaust Remembrance Program. These projects will not only promote Holocaust education and awareness, but will also play a key role in actively combatting antisemitism across Canada.
- Commitment to work with Statistics Canada to improve data consistency and training to better identify and report hate crimes, including antisemitism.

Universities

The OSE is committed to working with Canadian post-secondary institutions as they endeavour to address the scourge of antisemitism that has taken hold of their campuses. Throughout the year, the OSE has remained engaged with post-secondary institutions across the country, whether through on-campus visits, coordinated engagement with university administrations, regular calls with Jewish student groups, or discussions with associations and advocacy groups such as U15 and Universities Canada.

On August 14, 2024, MP Anthony Housefather and I sent a letter to secondary educational institutions across Canada ahead of the new school year. The letter included six concrete recommendations aimed at helping schools create a safer and more inclusive environment for Jewish students. These recommendations were grounded in the urgent need to address rising antisemitism and to ensure that all students can learn in settings free from hate, bias, or discrimination.

The OSE continues to work with the Tri-Council (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research) to both ensure that these funding organizations are aware and engaged on the ways that antisemitism can affect academic research in Canada, and, accordingly, that critical research is not impeded by antisemitism.

From October 2023 to the publishing of this report, the OSE met with several chapters of Hillel across Canada (Hillel BC, Hillel Quebec and Hillel Ontario) to better understand the experiences of post-secondary students facing antisemitism, work collaboratively on projects such as data collection, and share the experiences of post-secondary students with relevant authorities (university and college presidents and ministries of advanced education).

8 | <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2025/03/government-of-canada-hosts-national-forum-on-combatting-antisemitism.html>

Partnering with the Network of Engaged Canadian Academics

The Network of Engaged Canadian Academics (NECA) was formed in 2022 by faculty members who have been working on issues of antisemitism on Canadian campuses for almost 20 years. The non-partisan group of Jewish and non-Jewish academics advocate for strengthening academic freedom, viewpoint diversity, and inclusion on Canadian campuses. NECA now represents over 337 Jewish and non-Jewish academics from 44 institutions across Canada.

In March 2025, the OSE partnered with NECA who will providing training on the Handbook to higher learning institutions. NECA will also be producing companion pieces to the Handbook including subjects such as "Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom in a Canadian Context", and "Inclusive Campuses and Antisemitism".

Data and Research

The OSE worked closely with Statistics Canada and hate crimes units across the country to advocate for more timely and detailed hate crime data. Now that this information is available, our focus will shift to using it to inform evidence-based policy aimed at better protecting Jewish Canadians and other vulnerable communities. This includes assessing the need for targeted measures such as bubble legislation to ensure safety around places of worship, community centers, and other at-risk spaces.

The OSE has also supported organizations that are leading the way on research regarding Holocaust remembrance. The director of the OSE gave a presentation at the International Forum on Holocaust Memory and Learning in an Age of Manipulated Information put on by the Metropolis Institute in Krakow Poland on January 28, 2025.

Survey of Antisemitism in Schools

The OSE identified a significant lack of research and data on the prevalence of antisemitism in public schools. To address this, the OSE partnered with Professor Robert Brym, a leading Canadian sociologist at the University of Toronto and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, whose research has focused --extensively on antisemitism, social attitudes, and Jewish life in Canada. Together, they launched an Ontario-wide survey—the province with the largest population of Jewish students—to gather first-hand data from students and families. The results, released in July 2025, provide critical insights into the scope and character of antisemitism in school environments, forming a foundation for evidence-based responses by policymakers and educators.

Public Engagements, Addresses & Community Meetings



PHOTO 7

Deborah Lyons speaking at an event put on by the Shalom Hartman Institute in Toronto

The Special Envoy has delivered many addresses, attended numerous events, and met with Jewish community groups intended to contribute to the ongoing domestic dialogue surrounding Holocaust remembrance and combatting antisemitism, facilitating the integration of these important discussions into the public consciousness.

Here is a small sample of some of these events:

- The Special Envoy, along with the Prime Minister, Former Special Envoy Irwin Cotler and Israeli Ambassador to Canada Moed Iddo met with the Israeli delegation of family members of victims and hostages from the horrific October 7th terrorist attack.
- On November 3, 2023, Special Envoy Lyons spoke to the board of the UJA at their offices in Toronto about her vision for the office.
- In January 2024, marking the grim milestone of the hostages 100 days in captivity, the Special Envoy spoke at a solidarity gathering at Congregation Habonim of Toronto. This solemn event was attended by Canadian hostage families, Holocaust survivors, members of the public and members of parliament.
- On January 27, 2024, Special Envoy Lyons gave an address at the National Holocaust Monument in honour of International Holocaust Remembrance Day.
- On February 5, 2024, Special Envoy Lyons met with the Calgary Jewish Federation Board as well as the Community Relations Committee.
- The Special Envoy spoke in front of a crowd of 3000 people on March 24, 2024, at an event put on by Canadian Women Against Antisemitism in Toronto. The event called for an end to hatred in our streets and institutions.
- On May 17, 2024, Special Envoy Lyons introduced Yossi Klein Halevi at Toronto's Beth Tzedec. Mr. Klein Halevi spoke of the shared feelings of vulnerability between Israelis and North American Jews in a post-October 7 world.
- On September 5, 2024, the Special Envoy spoke alongside Michal Cotler-Wunsch at the of the Hamilton Jewish Federation's campaign launch.
- On September 8, 2024, Special Envoy Lyons marched in solidarity alongside Anthony Housefather and Montreal's Jewish community at the March for Jerusalem.
- On September 25, 2024, the Special Envoy again shared the stage with Michal Cotler-Wunsch at the Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg.
- On November 5, 2024, the Special Envoy spoke at the law firm McCarthy Tetreault for their Holocaust Education Week event about how leaders can promote inclusion in their organization.
- In December 9, 2024, the Special Envoy presented to the Senate standing committee on Human Rights.
- On February 13, 2025, Special Envoy Lyons met with students from Hillel at the University of Toronto. The students spoke to the Special Envoy about their experiences with antisemitism in classrooms, on campus, and within student government.

Working Within Government

Antisemitism within governmental departments, as in any institution, is a troubling reality that undermines the values of equity, inclusion, and human rights that Canada upholds. This form of antisemitism can manifest in several ways, including biased hiring or promotion practices, the exclusion of Jewish voices from decision-making processes, and the perpetuation of stereotypes or policies that marginalize Jewish communities. While these instances may not always be overt, they can create a culture of mistrust and discrimination, diminishing the ability of departments to serve all Canadians equitably.

Addressing antisemitism within governmental departments is vital for fostering public trust and ensuring that policies and programs reflect the principles of fairness and inclusivity. By tackling antisemitism internally, government departments set an example for the broader public sector, reinforcing Canada's commitment to a society where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their background or beliefs.

Public Service Employee Survey

With this in mind, the OSE, along with Member of Parliament Anthony Housefather and the Jewish Public Servants Network (JPSN) advocated for changes to the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES). Now for the first time, the PSES includes the option for Jewish employees to identify as both an ethnoreligious and religious group. By enabling Jews to self-identify, it makes the survey a more inclusive exercise and improves data on those who identify as Jewish and who work for Canada's largest employer- the Government of Canada.

Attestation

The OSE is currently collaborating with the Treasury Board Secretariat to develop a safeguard—such as an attestation—that would ensure government funding is not allocated to recipients that undermine Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy, which includes the IHRA working definition of antisemitism. This work builds on efforts already implemented for programs at Canadian Heritage. While policy development is ongoing, the OSE believes this work is critical and that public funding only be provided to recipients who uphold Canadian and democratic values, including a commitment to human rights and social cohesion.

Ministerial Meetings

Notably, Special Envoy Lyons has had ongoing conversations with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as well as several Ministers in cabinet including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, the President of the Treasury Board, Minister of Justice, Minister of Labour, Minister of Public Safety, Minister of National Defence, and the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth Canada, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. At each juncture, Special Envoy Lyons advocated for a safer and more inclusive country for Jewish Canadians, which would strengthen the fabric of Canada's democracy.



PHOTO 8

Deborah Lyons with the Honourable Chrystia Freeland

International Engagement

The Special Envoy's international work consists of representing Canada abroad at the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), collaborating with foreign diplomats based in Ottawa to advance advocacy initiatives focused on Holocaust remembrance and combatting antisemitism, and collaborating bilaterally and jointly with other Special Envoys, and Canadian diplomatic offices across the globe.

Below are some international initiatives undertaken by Special Envoy Lyons:

- On October 20, 2023, Special Envoy Lyons met with Giuseppe Pecoraro, Italy's Coordinator on Combatting Antisemitism at the time, in Rome, Italy. Mr. Pecoraro shared his insights on antisemitism in Italy, what has been effective in addressing it, and was interested in the situation in Canada post October 7.
- On October 30, 2023, Special Envoy Lyons and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met with the families of hostages taken during the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack on Israel. They re-affirmed Canada's commitment to supporting the release of all hostages.
- From November 27-30, 2023, Special Envoy Lyons attended the IHRA plenary meeting in Zagreb, Croatia. As this was her first international trip, she supported the Canadian delegation to the IHRA (consisting of 10 experts from across the country) and shared Canada's priorities in promoting Holocaust remembrance.
- From December 2-5, 2023, Special Envoy Lyons travelled to Israel where she met with President Isaac Herzog, visited Kibbutz Be'eri went to Yad Vashem, and met with officials at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss areas for collaboration on combatting antisemitism.
- On December 6, 2023, Special Envoy Lyons hosted her U.S. counterpart, Deborah Lipstadt, for a bilateral visit in Ottawa. They identified areas for cooperation and agreed to regularly communicate with one another given shared challenges.
- On February 12, 2024, Special Envoy Lyons met with the Ambassador of Ukraine to Canada, and the Ambassador of Germany to Canada. They exchanged on their countries' experiences addressing the rise in antisemitism, with Ukraine sharing reflections on the impacts of present-day armed conflict on Holocaust remembrance sites (i.e. Babyn Yar).
- From April 7-10, 2024, Special Envoy Lyons participated in the OSCE's antisemitism conference, at the invitation of Andrew Baker, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Personal Representative on Combating Antisemitism. Special Envoy Lyons spoke on a panel entitled: *Countering Anti-Semitism: From the cyber sphere to the real world*.
- From May 3-7, 2024, Special Envoy Lyons participated in the International March of the Living with a delegation of roughly 85 Canadians – including 6 Canadian Holocaust survivors, in Poland.
- From June 24-27, 2024, Special Envoy Lyons attended the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) meeting in Glasgow, Scotland as Canada's Head of Delegation.
- From July 16-19, 2024, Special Envoy Lyons traveled to Buenos Aires, Argentina to participate in a SECCA conference with her counterparts where a set of global guidelines to combat antisemitism were released. The conference coincided with a 30-year commemoration event of the bombing of a Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires.



PHOTO 9

Deborah Lyons with Israeli President Isaac Herzog

- From December 2-5, 2024, Special Envoy Lyons, attended the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) meeting in London, England. Canada was in the spotlight throughout the 4-day conference with significant attention placed on the [Canadian Handbook on the IHRA working definition of antisemitism](#), released in October 2024.
- From January 24-31, 2025, Special Envoy Lyons travelled to Poland to support Prime Minister Trudeau's participation in the 80th commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau on January 27. Canada's delegation included two Canadian Holocaust survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau: Miriam Zeigler (89) and Howard Chandler (96).

Observations and Recommendation

Observations from the Special Envoy

Since October 7th, I have heard directly from Canadians across the country—from parents of school-aged children to university students, educators, physicians, mental health professionals and countless others—about the sharp rise in antisemitism they are experiencing. Jewish students at all grade levels have faced harassment, isolation, and intimidation in their classrooms and schoolyards. Teachers have told me they no longer feel safe identifying as Jewish in their own schools. Doctors and psychologists have shared stories of antisemitic comments from colleagues and patients and are wondering what their future in Canada looks like. Time and time again, I've been told that our leaders have not done enough to send a clear, unequivocal message that antisemitism will not be tolerated in Canada. The silence has only deepened the pain and fear that so many in our community are now living with.

Alongside the rise in antisemitism, I've witnessed with deep concern the growing trend of Holocaust memory being coopted and distorted by various groups. The swastika—once a universally condemned symbol of hatred—has been repurposed at protests in ways that mock the historical suffering of Jews, often under the guise of political critique. Holocaust denial and distortion, once relegated to the fringes, are now becoming alarmingly normalized in Canada's public discourse and online spaces. Comparisons between the Holocaust and unrelated contemporary issues not only trivialize the genocide of six million Jews but also create an environment where antisemitism can flourish unchecked. Preserving the integrity of Holocaust memory is essential to safeguarding truth, combating hate, and upholding the values that underpin Canadian democracy.

A key element of the mandate moving forward must be centered upon the protection and facilitation of vibrant Jewish life, both domestically and abroad. It is critical that the community not only be protected from hateful crimes but be supported as they continue to make key contributions to the vibrant lives of Canadians and the global community by preserving, celebrating, and enlarging the many aspects of Jewish life.

We must appreciate that antisemitism and Holocaust denialism and distortion cannot be fought by Jews acting alone. What is needed is a constituency of conscience and of action, reflecting the need, and the imperative to combat antisemitism. Canadian Jews need and want stronger allyship from their governments to set the tone for how they are treated by the rest of country. If Canadian leaders are silent in the face of antisemitism and take no action to stop it, how can they expect everyday citizens to take a stand?

After a year of intensive diplomatic and policy action, public and expert consultation, and extensive domestic and multilateral partnership, the following recommendations are presented as a guide for future work:

Recommendations

1. **All levels of government must do a better job of solidifying a common front against hate and divisiveness.** A 'Team Canada' approach on law enforcement, rooted in cooperation between municipal, provincial, and federal governments, must be put in place to address antisemitism in particular and the rising hate environment more generally. Efforts are often siloed, with different levels of government working in a fragmented manner, or worse using the disconnect to point fingers at one another and deflect from their own duty to Canadians.

Combating antisemitism in Canada requires coordinated action across all levels of government—federal, provincial, and municipal—because each has distinct yet complementary responsibilities. The federal government sets national policy, international engagement, and funding priorities; provinces oversee education, policing, and human rights enforcement; and municipalities are on the front lines, where incidents often occur and where community support is most immediate. When their efforts align—rather than duplicate or contradict each other—responses become more efficient, consistent, and impactful. A unified approach ensures that antisemitism, is addressed comprehensively, from classroom to courtroom to city street.

2. **Everyone must be clear about calling out antisemitism, without qualification.** Despite good intentions, political, faith and business leaders often struggled to mention antisemitism on its own: Antisemitism was often spoken about in conjunction with Islamophobia and other forms of hate, even when the connection was not apparent nor relevant. Some individuals and entities felt discomfort in addressing antisemitism on its own, drawing false equivalences with other forms of hate.

Treating antisemitism as if it must always be counterbalanced risks diminishing the seriousness of the issue and undermines efforts to address it fully. It also politicizes what is fundamentally a human rights concern and inadvertently fosters a sense of competition among marginalized groups, rather than solidarity. Recognizing antisemitism clearly and unequivocally is not an act of exclusion; it is a necessary step toward building a society where all forms of hate are confronted appropriately, and where every community's pain is acknowledged on its own terms.

3. **Canada needs, and Canadians deserve, leadership that is courageous and non-partisan in countering the scourge of hatred that has been building.** One of the most troubling revelations as we traveled across the country was the constant avoidance by leaders (not just political but business, religious, community, etc.) to standup to the antisemitism that was sweeping across Canada. In fairness many were confused about the right words and actions to take but most were simply afraid to be targeted and face the inevitable blowback and intimidation. Not only was this an abandonment of our Jewish citizens, but it does also not bode well for our future as a compassionate, inclusive society. Leaders must have the courage and wisdom to bring us together and counter the polarization and divisiveness that continues to pit communities against one another. Our shared humanity is at stake.

4. **Strengthen Holocaust Remembrance and Education.** Canada's efforts to preserve Holocaust memory must be matched by meaningful action across federal and provincial levels. The upcoming introduction of the more robust, mandatory Holocaust I Holocaust education curricula in most provinces is a welcome step and must be supported with educator training, survivor engagement, and classroom-ready resources to ensure impact beyond the textbook.

At the national level, we urge the government to prioritize the implementation of the recommendations from the Advisory Panel on the National Holocaust Monument and to enhance the visibility and educational role of the Monument itself.

In parallel, we recommend deepening collaboration with the Canadian War Museum to enrich Holocaust content and historical context within its permanent exhibits. Additional support should be directed to the country's four Holocaust museums, to counter the rising threat of Holocaust distortion, inversion and denial.

Notably, Ottawa remains the only capital city among those with large Jewish populations that lacks a dedicated Holocaust museum or a major permanent exhibit—a gap that should be urgently addressed as part of a comprehensive national strategy.

5. Canadian political parties need to refrain from making antisemitism a partisan issue. The desire to foster political gain on the backs of those suffering from hatred and discrimination is a serious dereliction of civic duty by political parties. It dishonors the communities impacted and it is a grave disservice to the fight against hatred. As an example, National Holocaust Remembrance Day must remain apolitical and attendance at commemoration events should have senior level attendance with a focus on the essence of the day.

6. Let's build on the foundations put in place. Future credibility demands it.

6.1. Implement the Recommendations from the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

In December 2024, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights released its report, Heightened Antisemitism in Canada and How to Confront It. Thoroughly debated by all four parties of the Parliament of Canada, this comprehensive document recommended strategies to address the increasing antisemitism in Canada. Key recommendations include:

- **University Environment:** That the Government of Canada, respecting the jurisdiction of, and in consultation and collaboration with, the provinces and territories, affirm the need for university administrations to prioritize a safe campus environment for Jewish students, faculty and staff through enforcing campus rules, standards, and policies and reaffirming faculty responsibilities.
- **Educational Initiatives:** That efforts are taken to enhance understanding of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism and ensure holocaust education includes explanations of modern-day antisemitism and integrates a Jewish community-centered lens.
- **EDI Programming:** That the full diversity of the Jewish identity be acknowledged within Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) frameworks, including Jewish peoplehood, ethnicity, etc., as well as Zionist and Indigenous aspects of Jewish identity. This includes the recognition of Zionism as the self-determination of Jewish people in their ancestral homeland of Israel.
- **Funding Oversight:** That, building on the efforts of the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Government of Canada take additional measures to ensure that recipients of government funding comply with Canada's anti-discrimination and anti-hate laws and do not advocate intolerance, discrimination, prejudice, racism or hate. Such measures should include enhancements to vetting processes, and provisions allowing the Government of Canada to terminate a funding agreement.
- **Inclusive Frameworks:** That the Government of Canada reiterate that, under section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, "[e]veryone has the following fundamental freedoms: freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; freedom of peaceful assembly; and freedom of association," Canadians have the right to be Zionists, and that it is unacceptable in Canadian society to target Zionists or to deny them fair and equitable access to public spaces for the sole reason that they are Zionists.

To ensure these recommendations lead to tangible outcomes, it's crucial for federal and provincial governments to integrate them into policies and allocate appropriate resources. Establishing oversight mechanisms will help monitor progress and ensure accountability.

6.2. Implement the Commitments from the National Forum on Antisemitism and Law Enforcement

The Government of Canada must uphold and fulfill the commitments it made following the March 6, 2025, Forum on Combatting Antisemitism. Their implementation cannot be delayed or diluted. The

government's credibility, and its broader commitment to human rights, depends on translating these commitments into lasting policy and action. These commitments include the following:

1. Working collaboratively with provinces and territories and other partners to:
 - develop comprehensive National Action Commitments to combat antisemitism;
 - share promising practices in provincial/territorial legislation and other approaches that address hate-related conduct, including conduct motivated by antisemitism;
 - identify ways to improve the criminal justice system responses to hate crimes, including those motivated by antisemitism, including training as well as developing resources to support successful investigations and prosecutions;
 - increase awareness of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition and all elements contained within the Canadian Handbook on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism.
2. Financial commitments:
 - Up to \$10 million in immediate new funding to the Community Resilience Fund to support grassroots organizations and work done on the ground to help address all forms of hate, including antisemitism;
 - Investing \$26.8 million over four years to support police colleges to provide training on all hate crimes. This involves training for police to ensure that antisemitism and acts of hatred are identified;
 - Ensuring that transfer payments are designed, delivered and managed with integrity, accountability and transparency, and that recipients of government funding respect the values underlying the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
3. Examining potential amendments to the Criminal Code to strengthen tools for law enforcement and prosecutors to address hate crimes, including those motivated by antisemitism, in the following major areas:
 - access to religious and cultural buildings;
 - extreme forms of hate speech;
 - display of terror symbols; and
 - impediments to the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes.
4. Working with Statistics Canada to:
 - better recognize and report on the existence of hate crimes;
 - to improve data consistency and awareness to help everyone better understand the extent of hate crimes in Canada, including acts of antisemitism;
 - to further evaluate and refine data standards and training material to ensure it is meeting the intended purpose.

7. Getting our own house in order. As noted in the Justice Committee's recommendations, antisemitism training at the highest levels of the Canadian public service is essential to ensure that senior decision-makers are equipped to recognize, understand, and address this form of hatred effectively. While general anti-racism and diversity training exist, they often overlook the specific manifestations and historical context of antisemitism. This omission can lead to environments where antisemitic incidents are misunderstood or inadequately addressed, undermining the safety and inclusion of Jewish public servants.

Implementing specialized training, developed and delivered by reputable organizations with expertise in antisemitism—ensures that content is accurate, relevant, and sensitive to the lived experiences of Jewish individuals. Such training should encompass the historical roots of antisemitism, contemporary expressions, and training on the implementation of the IHRA definition. Collaboration with the departmental chapters of the Jewish Public Service Networks will also contribute to more relevant, grounded training for the workplace.

This greater awareness and understanding will not just ensure a healthier, inclusive workplace but it will also help to ensure policy development and program delivery that is more aligned with the principles of the Canadian Government's Anti-Racism Strategy and the Canadian Action Plan for Combating Hate. This is after all a 'whole of government' commitment.

8. The Anti-Racism Strategy must be seen as a critical framework for all Federal Departments.

The second Anti-Racism Strategy (2.0) was released in the fall of 2024 by Heritage Canada as "a whole of government" policy framework. However, little has been done to clarify for other federal government leaders the critical importance of this framework and the role each plays in ensuring their workplace, policies and program reflect the principles and guidelines of the ARS. Both PMO and PCO have a role to play in supporting Heritage Canada leadership to address this awareness vacuum. The ARS, along with its close cousin, the Canadian Action Plan for Combatting Hate (CAPCH), are meant to deliver a full federal court press against hate, divisiveness and polarization. This overarching framework is the architecture in which the work of the Office of the Special Envoy can best flourish.

9. Maintaining the Office of the Special Envoy. The government must continue to fund the OSE with dedicated resources. As outlined in this report, the SE office provides policy leadership, community engagement, and international representation on issues of antisemitism. Its work ensures that antisemitism is identified, called out, and addressed through, public awareness, active problem solving with government partners and solid institutional training. Moreover, the OSE supports Holocaust remembrance and education, which are essential in a time of increasing Holocaust distortion and denial, particularly on social media and in public discourse. The SE Office has also been frontline in demonstrating Canada's commitment to fighting antisemitism at home and on the global stage, countering the post Oct 7th negative portrayal on our streets and campuses.

The OSE serves as a bridge between government and Canada's Jewish communities, providing an accountable, centralized mechanism to hear concerns, respond to incidents, and shape appropriate responses. Without sustained funding, the continuity of these efforts is jeopardized, and Canada risks falling behind its commitments made at international fora such as the Malmö Forum and the March 2025 National Summit on Antisemitism

10. Respectful dialogue - we cannot delay much longer, or we will not find our way back. As antisemitism spiked across the country after Oct 7th, 2023, polarization and division often prevailed over collaboration, tolerance and reconciliation: The horrendous events of October 7th, and the chaos and aftermath that followed, both in Canada and across the globe, eroded our social cohesion and ability to engage in dialogue with one another. We need to remind ourselves, and leaders need to lead on this, that we can be pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian at the same time. And that conflicts that happen thousands of miles from our shores should not be used to divide Canadians and turn us against each other. The federal government must actively engage in and support interfaith and inter-community dialogue and guide us to restore our shared values as Canadians before it is too late.

Conclusion

The work undertaken by the Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism over the past year 18 months, has been both challenging and inspiring. The meteoric rise in antisemitism across Canada and the world serves as a sobering reminder of the urgency and importance of the office's mandate.

Through initiatives like the Handbook, strengthened Holocaust education curricula, and partnerships with law enforcement, community leaders, and policymakers at all levels of government, tangible progress has been made. These efforts reflect a steadfast commitment to addressing antisemitism, preserving Holocaust remembrance, and ensuring the safety of Canada's Jewish community.

However, the challenges ahead demand political action, vocal support, continued vigilance, and increased partnership and collaboration at all levels of leadership. Antisemitism is not merely a Jewish issue, but a threat to the principles of equality, inclusion, and democracy that underpin Canadian society. Addressing it requires the collective efforts of all Canadians—government, institutions, and individuals alike—to ensure Canada is a place where no one feels unsafe or marginalized because of their identity.

As we look to the future, the Office of the Special Envoy reaffirms its dedication to fostering a Canada where Jewish life is celebrated, where Holocaust remembrance is enduring, and where antisemitism is confronted with unwavering resolve. Let this report stand as both a testament to what has been accomplished and a call to action for what must still be done. Only by working together can we combat hate, uphold human rights, and build a Canada where all communities thrive in dignity and respect.