



Legislative Council – March 15th, 2018

## Motion Regarding the Joint Board of Directors and Legislative Council Special Committee on Anti-Semitism

**Whereas**, SSMU is an organization committed to empowering groups “disadvantaged due to irrelevant personal characteristics such as race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, gender identification, age, mental or physical disability, language, sexual orientation or social class”, as stated in the preamble of the SSMU constitution;

**Whereas**, in the Fall of 2017 the Board of Directors created a committee to examine the presence and history of anti-Semitism at McGill University;

**Whereas**, this committee is comprised of a wide array of Jewish groups on campus, representing a diverse cross-section of Jewish groups, as outlined in Appendix A;

**Whereas**, these groups spent extensive time finding compromises on contentious issues on campus and were able to reach consensus on the majority of decisions made by the committee;

**Whereas**, the Special Committee is required to ensure the successful implementation of these recommendations;

**Whereas**, this anti-Semitism committee has met regularly since November of 2017, with the intent to contextualize anti-Semitism at McGill, to provide a working definition of anti-Semitism, and to create recommendations to address anti-Semitism at McGill;

**Whereas**, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of anti-Semitism is widely accepted, and has been adopted by the Canadian Government as the Ottawa Protocols;

**Whereas**, the Ottawa Protocols have been adopted at other Canadian universities, such as Ryerson University, in 2016;

**Whereas**, each clause of the Ottawa Protocols was individually discussed and passed by the Special Committee, with every clause but two passing with consensus;

**Whereas**, the Special Committee approved a working definition of anti-Semitism, as seen in Appendix B;

**Whereas**, “anti-Semitism is antithetical to collective liberation; it hurts Jews and it also undermines, weakens, and derails all of our movements for social justice and collective liberation”<sup>1</sup>;

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<sup>1</sup> *Understanding Antisemitism: An Offering to our Movement*. Jews for Racial & Economic Justice. November 2017.



**Whereas**, addressing anti-Semitism is a vital component of the fight against all forms of oppression and discrimination and should not be neglected by broader social justice movements;

**Whereas**, the VP University Affairs is mandated under their portfolio to “oversee the society’s research endeavors; to operationalize the society’s commitment to equity through Policy, programming and services.”

**Be it Resolved, that** the Special Committee be renewed for the academic year of 2018-2019.

**Be it further Resolved, that** the mandate of the Special Committee is to serve as a reference to SSMU, the Board of Directors, and Legislative Council in the implementation of these recommendations, or in the case of allegations of anti-Semitism.

**Be it further Resolved, that** this Special Committee be comprised of the same club membership as the original mandate, as outlined in Appendix A.

**Be it further Resolved, that** this Special Committee meet a minimum of twice per semester, but may meet more often if necessary.

**Be it further Resolved, that** this Special Committee be mandated to present to the Board of Directors and Legislative Council once per semester to update on the progress of implementation.

**Be it further Resolved that** SSMU adopt the working definition outlined by the Special Committee, as outlined in Appendix B.

**Be it further Resolved, that** the VP University Affairs be mandated under their portfolio to implement the recommendations of the Special Committee on anti-Semitism, which are as follows:

- Hire a special researcher to research campus anti-Semitism, who;
  - must have relevant experience and expertise,
  - will look at anti-Semitism both at McGill and other public universities,
  - will be used as a reference for allegations of anti-Semitism on campus in conjunction with the committee,
  - must be approved by the Special committee with a majority vote,
- Organize open workshops through SSMU to educate McGill students on issues relevant to anti-Semitism such as:
  - Sephardic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jewry,
  - Modern-day Holocaust denial.
- These workshops and their leaders must be approved by a simple majority of the Special Committee and by the hired researcher.



- Special committee and hired researcher should be used as references in the structure of these open workshops.
- Make SSMU executive committee and affiliated student groups aware of all major religious holidays of all religious denominations:
  - The McGill administration provides professors with a list of major holidays; this can be used and distributed to SSMU executives and affiliated clubs,
  - This will decrease religious barriers to student participation.

**Be it further Resolved, that** the VP University Affairs be mandated to advocate to the administration for the implementation of the following recommendations:

- Adopt the working definition of anti-Semitism as outlined by the Special Committee.
- Proactively consult all Jewish groups at McGill University in the event of an anti-Semitic incident or allegations of anti-Semitism.
- Include anti-Semitism in Race Project workshops, using the working definition of anti-Semitism as outlined by the Special Committee and in consultation with the Committee.

**Be it further Resolved, that** the May training for new SSMU Executives include a mandatory session on anti-Semitism, provided by a source approved by a simple majority of the Special Committee, and using the working definition as outlined by the Special Committee.

**Be it further Resolved, that** the special committee revisit its terms of reference regarding its composition and report to council and board by the end of the fall 2018 semester with recommendations.

**Moved by:**

Muna Tojiboeva, SSMU President  
Esteban Herpin, SSMU VP Finance  
Jennifer Chan, Arts Representative  
Kevin Zhou, Arts Representative  
Corinne Bulger, Arts Representative  
Tre Mansdoerfer, Senate Caucus representative  
Anthony Koch, First Year Council representative



#### Appendix A:

##### Special Committee composition:

1. Jewish Studies Students' Association
2. Hillel McGill
3. Israel on Campus
4. Chabad at McGill
5. Am McGill
6. Independent Jewish Voices
7. Representative from the Board of Directors
8. Representative from Legislative Council
9. A non-voting neutral external chair as decided upon by the Special Committee by majority vote

#### Appendix B:

##### Definition of Anti-Semitism:

We reaffirm the EUMC – now Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) – working definition of antisemitism, which sets forth that:

“Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective - such as, especially but not exclusively - the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy, or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Claiming that the Jewish People have no connection to the Land of Israel.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “Yet, noting this connection should not undermine nor overlook the rights to land ownership of the indigenous Palestinian population (including Palestinian Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike), who continue to be denied of these rights today.”



Examples of the ways in which antisemitism manifests itself with regard to the State of Israel taking into account the overall context could include:

- Applying double standards by requiring of it behaviour not expected or demanded of any other nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g. claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel.
- Denying Jewish people their right to self determination, defined by the UN Charter as: “the right to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”<sup>3</sup>

Let it be clear: Criticism of Israel is not anti-Semitic, and saying so is wrong. But singling Israel out for selective condemnation and opprobrium – let alone denying its right to exist or seeking its destruction – is discriminatory and hateful, and not saying so is dishonest.<sup>4</sup>

#### Demographic Characteristics of Jewish People:

The Special Committee would like to directly acknowledge the general failure of mainstream dialogue within and beyond the Jewish community to engage with non-Ashkenazi identities and histories. Jews are a racially and ethnically diverse community. Some Jewish ethnic groups include Eastern and Western European and Russian (Ashkenazi); Middle Eastern, North African, Central Asian, and Balkan (Mizrahi); Ethiopian and Ugandan (African); and Spanish and Portuguese (Sephardi). There are mixed-race Jews whose ancestors include many kinds of non-European peoples, and both white people and People of Color who have chosen (or whose parents, grandparents or ancestors have chosen) to become Jews through conversion. There are also significant, ethnically diverse Jewish communities all over the world. Jews live in 70% of the world's nations. From the ancient community of Chinese Jews in Kaifeng to the B'nai, Cochini and Baghdadi Jews of India and the many Jewish enclaves of Latin America, Jews come from every part of the world, and look every kind of way.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “The UN Charter equally entails recognition of the Palestinian right to self determination. Failing to recognize both is unjust, and undermines our “fight against all forms of oppression” (see Whereas Clause above). Recognizing the rights of all aligns with the struggle for collective liberation or finding a just, durable solution in Israel/Palestine.”

<sup>4</sup> IJV McGill adds: “As a collective of non and anti-Zionist Jewish people, IJV does not believe that seeking justice in Palestine is hateful or discriminatory. As Jews, we fight for a society in which all can exist in equality and equity, and condemn a state that privileges a Ashkenazi Jews over Mizrahi and Black Jews, as well as Palestinian Muslims and Christians.”

<sup>5</sup> *Understanding Antisemitism: An Offering to our Movement*. Jews for Racial & Economic Justice. November 2017.



Office of the Parliamentarian | Bureau du parlementaire  
Tel: (514) 398-6800 | Fax: (514) 398-7490 | [parliamentarian@ssmu.ca](mailto:parliamentarian@ssmu.ca)  
3600 McTavish St., Suite 1200, Montréal, QC, H3A 0G3  
Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories

In the Canadian Jewish community, there are 35,050 individuals who were born in the Former Soviet Union. There are also 21,155 Jews born in Israel, 17,805 born in the United States, 15,130 in Western Europe, 13,610 in Eastern Europe (excluding the FSU), and 12,020 in North Africa and the Middle East (excluding Israel). Sephardim comprise 24.5% of the 90,780 members of the Jewish community in Montreal.<sup>6</sup> Greater than half (56.2%) of the Sephardic population are immigrants. More than a quarter of Sephardim (28.3%) were born in Morocco.<sup>7</sup> Like all other People of Color, Jews of Color are the targets of racism and white supremacy, while as Jews they are also targeted by anti-Semitism. They simultaneously experience racist marginalization, microaggressions and outright hostility (and often disbelief in their very existence) from Jews that benefit from whiteness, non-Jewish People of Color, and from Canadian society as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 2011 National Household Survey Analysis The Jewish Community of Montreal.” Federationcja.org.  
[https://www.federationcja.org/en/jewish\\_montreal/demographics/](https://www.federationcja.org/en/jewish_montreal/demographics/)

<sup>7</sup> Shahrar, Charles. “The Jewish Population of Canada – 2011 National Household Survey [2015 Reports Added].” Jewish Data Bank. <http://www.jewishdatabank.org/Studies/details.cfm?StudyID=743>.

<sup>8</sup> *Understanding Antisemitism: An Offering to our Movement*. Jews for Racial & Economic Justice. November 2017.