



CANADA

# Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, December 1, 2009**

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Chair: Mario Silva



## Parliamentary Publications

Tuesday, December 1, 2009

• (0810)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.)):** Good morning, everybody. I'd like to begin the sixth hearing of the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism. I call the meeting to order.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here.

We'll again divide our work into two different parts. We will begin with the first part, from around 8:10, now, until about 9:20 or 9:25. We'll give everybody a five-minute break and then we'll start a second part that will go until 11 o'clock.

We have our witnesses with us. I'll read out the names and the organizations first and then call them as witnesses: Fo Niemi, co-founder and executive director of the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations; Tony Comper, co-founder of Fighting Anti-Semitism Together, FAST; Matthew Johnson, media education specialist, Media Awareness Network; and Nora Sanders, general secretary, and Bruce Gregersen, general council officer for programs, United Church of Canada. I apologize if I mispronounced anybody's name.

I also want to alert members to the fact that we will have more members appearing in a few minutes. Unfortunately, there was an emergency caucus meeting—at least of the Liberal members—at 8 o'clock, so not many of them are here. My apologies for that. It was sort of an unexpected meeting that was called, but they will be here shortly.

Everything the witnesses will state is on the record. In fact, we will be recording these words and hopefully will also have them as part of our report.

Members all know this, but I just want to alert the witnesses that there are 10 minutes for each presentation, and that is followed by questions and answers.

Mr. Comper?

**Mr. Tony Comper (Co-Founder, Fighting Antisemitism Together (FAST)):** Excuse me, Mr. Chair. Do these microphones self-activate?

**The Chair:** Yes. Everything will be fine.

[*Translation*]

For interpretation reasons, it is probably better that we begin...

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** I want to be able to ask questions in French.

**The Chair:** No, I know.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** We have to have something in French in the course of our work.

**The Chair:** You wish to...

**A voice:** I can speak in both languages.

**The Chair:** It is probably best that we wait and that you be one of the last witnesses, because there is no interpretation.

Let us begin with Mr. Comper. Afterwards, we will have Mr. Johnson, Ms. Sanders, Mr. Gregersen and yourself. I hope that works for you.

[*English*]

Mr. Comper, we'll start with you.

**Mr. Tony Comper:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Actually, FAST and what it's doing are both fairly well explained in the briefing package we sent to the committee members and the other witnesses. I can give just a little bit of background, however, since the question of why we're doing this often arises.

The organization FAST, Fighting Antisemitism Together, started back in 2004—a little more than five years ago—from a concept point of view. It stems from a number of anti-Semitic incidents that occurred in Toronto and Montreal at that time.

My wife observed that when the television commentators were interviewing some young children who were impacted by the incidents.... You may recall some of them. They were the usual panoply of kicking over tombstones in Jewish churchyards and burning the Talmud Torah school in Montreal. Those were just some of the prominent features of that outburst of incidents.

At any rate, the television commentator was interviewing some of the young children who were impacted by these incidents. My wife was very concerned to see the apparent fear on the faces of these young Jewish children about why these things were occurring.

Our conclusion was that something had to be done. Our second conclusion—it's something that we hold very firmly—was this: anti-Semitism is not a problem for Jews to solve, it's a problem for non-Jews to solve.

After a lot of consultation with people in the Jewish community and other people, we assembled a coalition of about 30 to 35 business and community leaders across Montreal and Toronto at the time, some from Calgary, who were prepared to do three things. One was to give me some money. We asked each of them for \$10,000. We asked them to be prepared to put their personal names publicly speaking out against anti-Semitism, and also to get their corporations or their community organizations to endorse this. Of note is the fact that all the members of this coalition of non-business community and business leaders were non-Jews. We thought that was very important.

We started by publishing full-page ads in the press in Toronto and Montreal, with all of our names, saying why we felt we had to speak out against anti-Semitism.

Our most basic conclusion is that Canada fancies itself as a very tolerant nation. If we can't figure this out, who can?

The objective of the organization is to focus on developing educational materials to be delivered to kids in grades 6, 7, and 8. They're at the age at which they could arrive at an understanding of some of these concepts. If you leave it too long, they're beyond the point of being able to be influenced by some of the educational materials.

The educational materials, which we developed in concert with the people from the Canadian Jewish Congress charities committee, then had to conform to—this was the biggest challenge—the curriculum requirements of all the provinces and district school boards and things of that nature. We didn't want to have multiple versions of the educational materials.

The educational materials include teachers' guides, learning materials, and an award-winning DVD, by the way, which has testimonials from people. It talks to intolerance in general and anti-Semitism as a specific manifestation of intolerance. It has testimonials from people from aboriginal communities, from survivors from Rwanda and what happened there. Interestingly enough, it has testimony from a black hockey player who was precluded from playing in the NHL because he was black; this was in the 1940s. There are some Holocaust survivors as well. The DVD is actually a very powerful device.

We have now delivered the program to more than 500,000 young Canadian children across the country. In fact, I think the number in the package says it's 536,000 at this point in time. It's gone throughout all the school boards. That doesn't include the repetitions that occur. For example, some of the teachers are using this every year with their classes. The multiple classes aren't included in that package.

My wife is fond of saying that if only 1% of the young people are impacted sufficiently that they would "choose their voice" and speak up against intolerance in whatever manifestations they see it, then we would have a significant cohort of ambassadors to help make our society more tolerant.

• (0815)

It's going quite well. It has kind of exceeded our expectations. Our plans for 2010 include a rollout to another 200,000 young people in this country. We've had expressions of interest from abroad, but our

conclusion is that we're doing this in Canada first, so let's make sure we do a pretty good job.

It's very difficult to measure the impact, although you can see some of the anecdotal attestations. In fact, we went back to the school where we launched the program in September 2005 this year, and we had some wonderful testimonials, which we have recorded on DVD, from some of the young people who several years ago were impacted by this. That kind of speaks for itself in terms of their understanding.

The problem is more widely spread than I had concluded, considering one of the reactions we got was for people to say "Why are you doing this? Anti-Semitism is a problem of 60 years ago and is no longer prevalent in this country." Events, not just in Canada but around the world, speak to the awful truth of what's going on right now. At an event the other evening—Mario was there—I referred to the work of Denis MacShane from the United Kingdom. Members of the committee are all familiar with what Denis has done in the United Kingdom. His new book is pretty frightening, by the way, in the way it describes what's happening.

Chairman, I will leave it at that and open up the floor to any questions from members of the committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll hear from all the witnesses, and then the members will ask questions.

Matthew Johnson, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Matthew Johnson (Media Education Specialist, Media Awareness Network):** Good morning.

I'm going to start by saying a little bit about Media Awareness Network, for those who may not be familiar with us. We are a national non-profit organization, and our purpose, our mission, is to ensure that children and youth possess the necessary skills, particularly critical thinking skills, to understand and actively engage with media.

Throughout the history of our organization, we have been involved in anti-racism activities because so much of the concern around racism, and anti-Semitism in particular, has to do with media messages.

In recent years, we've been particularly concerned about the Internet, and, as I'll detail in a moment, we've produced a number of resources for dealing with Internet hate. I think our submission really covers everything we have to say, so with the inquiry's permission, I'm just going to read a few selections from our submission.

Technological advances, such as personal computers, the Internet, and wireless devices, have changed the face of hate speech, providing hate groups with greater reach, a mask of anonymity, and new ways to appeal to youth.

Christopher Wolf, who is the chair of the Anti-Defamation League's Internet task force and the chairman of the International Network Against Cyber Hate, has called the Internet "a powerful and virulent platform for anti-Semitism—hate towards Jews—that has a direct link to violence, terrorism and the deterioration of civil society". In his words, "Hitler and the Nazis could never have dreamed of such an engine of hate."

His statement is echoed in a study published in *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* in 2003, which showed that the Internet is a significant factor in allowing extremist groups who promote hatred to spread their messages and recruit new members.

The ability the Internet gives hate groups to indoctrinate and recruit new members is particularly concerning when we consider the amount of time young people spend unsupervised on the Internet. In 2005 Media Awareness Network conducted a survey, "Young Canadians in a Wired World"; we surveyed 5,000 Canadian students between grades 4 and 11. Students were surveyed in every province and territory. We found, in that time, that two out of every 10 students had come across a website that promoted hate towards a particular group or individual. It should be noted that those were just the cases of students themselves recognizing that these websites or other Internet destinations were promoting hatred. In many cases, the hate material on the web, as I'll expand on in a moment, is concealed in various ways.

As well, the rapid growth in popularity of so-called web 2.0 technologies, such as social networking sites and user-generated video sites, has helped to fuel an explosion in online hate content. The ADL noted in a recent article that social networking sites have become a place where anti-Semitic misinformation is harboured and spread. On sites such as MySpace and Facebook, for example, there are hundreds of groups that feature the words "Hitler" or "Nazi" in their names, many of which were established to promote neo-Nazism and, more broadly, anti-Semitism.

According to the U.S.-based Southern Poverty Law Center, there were 12,000 white supremacist propaganda videos and Holocaust-denial pseudo-documentaries openly available on video-sharing websites such as YouTube. These postings have one purpose: to provoke hate and to recruit haters, particularly young people who are the main audience of these sites.

Nor is online hate confined to websites. Hate groups have successfully used media such as video games and "white power" music and music videos to appeal to youth. The Internet allows these to be distributed worldwide.

● (0820)

A common approach to protecting youth from inappropriate online content of all kinds is the use of filtering and blocking software. Often these programs are marketed to parents and schools with the promise of monitoring and limiting children's ability to access offensive material. However, according to *Consumer Reports*, although many of these programs are successful in blocking sexually explicit content, they are not very effective at blocking hate material, especially when presented with disinformation.

An example of a disinformation or stealth site is a website whose web address is martinlutherking.org. From the sounds of it, you can

imagine that a student doing research on Dr. King might easily imagine that it is a reliable source of information. However, this site is actually a front for a white supremacist group, which uses it to spread misinformation about Dr. King. There are many such stealth hate sites, which leads us to suspect that the amount of hate material is actually substantially higher than what students have reported to us.

Moreover, filtering programs, as well as being unable to detect these stealth sites, are largely ineffective at blocking content that is contained in video games, music, or other non-text media, or that's accessed through peer-to-peer downloading networks.

Because hate groups promote their message through misinformation, propaganda, and appeals to bias and emotion, a more effective response to protecting youthful Internet users is a media literacy approach based on critical thinking.

The third International Symposium on Hate, held by the Institute for International Affairs and the League for Human Rights, a branch of B'nai Brith Canada, brought together many different individuals, including those in the law enforcement, government, legislative, industry, educational, and community sectors of society. Recommendations from the symposium called for increased efforts to promote media literacy, and in their words, "not just for children and teenagers, but also for parents and other care-givers, as well as the broad spectrum of educators", who need to be able to understand and navigate the medium of choice for the youth of today.

Media literacy education has been proven to be effective in mitigating potential negative media influences on the physical and mental well-being of children and youth. Studies have concluded, for instance, that media literacy interventions can help high-risk youth develop more responsible decision-making skills in their own lives.

Media Awareness Network provides Canadian schools with education resources and programs on Internet hate. These programs help students understand the legal definition of hate, how the Internet facilitates dissemination of hateful materials, and how to report hate when it is encountered.

At the same time, these materials explore what we call "the spectrum of hate", ranging from put-downs to racist humour to outright hate content that exists online and in popular culture, in order to understand how this spectrum may desensitize youth to intolerance and hate messages. Students are encouraged to examine how their own online activities could influence peer attitudes, reinforce negative stereotypes, and promote "othering".

Our online hate resources, which were developed with the support of Canadian Heritage, include professional development workshops for teachers, interactive games, and lesson plans for the classroom. They're currently used by school boards and education facilities across Canada. They've received significant international attention, particularly in Europe, as many countries struggle to address rising anti-Semitic and racist attitudes.

Between 2005 and 2007, MNet was invited to present a Canadian education approach to Internet hate at four European conferences organized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. In 2008 the Media Awareness Network was invited to join a Justice Canada working group examining the feasibility of a Canadian tip line for reporting online hate. There was unanimous agreement among the members that public and school-based education must be an essential component of any effective strategy to address online hate.

As current methods for addressing racist and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet prove ineffectual, experts in the field increasingly believe that the most effective response to preventing the spread of hate dialogue and youth recruitment by hate groups through the Internet is education, and in particular media and digital literacy.

● (0825)

An educational response that emphasizes awareness, empathy, and responsible citizenship and equips individuals to think critically and take action is an important first step in addressing the growing issue of anti-Semitic and racist messages on the Internet. We urge the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism to recognize media and digital literacy as a critical element of any strategy put into place to address anti-Semitism, and we encourage the Government of Canada to continue its support of the development and dissemination of awareness and education programs for Canadians addressing Internet hate.

Thank you very much.

● (0830)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Johnson.

Now we'll hear from Nora Sanders and Bruce Gregersen.

**Ms. Nora Sanders (General Secretary, United Church of Canada):** Thank you very much. It's an honour to be here today. Thank you for inviting us.

The United Church of Canada represents about 3,400 congregations across the country in many diverse corners of our nation, communities big and small. Of course, as a church, we're based on the principle of loving your neighbour, so we wanted to come and speak about anti-Semitism, because by its very nature, hate is the antithesis of what we seek to be and how we seek to live and the way we encourage our members to live.

The United Church itself was based on the coming together of several Christian denominations, and perhaps because of that origin, it's always been important to us to have interconnections within the Christian community and beyond, recognizing that differences are something to be celebrated, not something to be feared. In relation to our Jewish neighbours, we recognize common roots of our faith. We live by many of the same stories. We recognize the historical events such as the Holocaust, blemishes on our world history, which, as a society, it's very difficult to come to grips with and which we must never forget. We recognize, through events such as those we read about in the news a couple of weeks ago in Calgary, that these things continue to be alive in Canada today, and that's a source of great sadness for us as Christians, so we wanted to come and speak about that.

In our history and in recent years, we've had active discussions with Jewish friends and neighbours, which have resulted in the production of a paper called "Bearing Faithful Witness", which sets out our beliefs and the work we did together. Bruce Gregersen was instrumental in that work as it was being done, so I'll ask him to speak a little bit about that background.

**Mr. Bruce Gregersen (General Council Officer, Programs, United Church of Canada):** Thank you.

Again, thanks for the invitation to be here.

We want to make, as part of our introduction to the conversations that will follow, just three points. The first is that by our presence here we want to affirm with you what's implicit in the work of this committee—namely, that anti-Semitism is a distinct hatred that's been pervasive in our world and needs to be addressed in its own right.

Second, it is, as I think as has also been shared here, a canary in the mine. We are part of a world that is fragile. The recent vote in Switzerland to ban minarets is an example of the fragility in what we believe is one of the most stable countries in the world.

We pride ourselves on the diversity of our country, but we would be foolish to think that this diversity is guaranteed without the potential for conflict. Anti-Semitism is a revelation, perhaps, or an indication of a larger disease in our world that in part flows out of the increasing reality of pluralism. It has many sources. Part of it is fear of losing what we have known and what is comfortable and familiar.

Third, as the United Church of Canada, we want to offer to you an example of a church that has struggled and is struggling to work at deep levels of theology and practice to witness to a reality of our faith that it does not have to be exclusive and therefore lay foundations for believing that ultimately all faiths but one true faith will be extinguished in the world.

What we want to do is outline for you, as we did in our paper, the work we undertook in bearing faithful witness and—in a related resource, in relationship to Islam, that we may know each other—the work we have done in articulating a theology that affirms differences in faith and understanding and experience of God as part of God's design for the world. It seems inconceivable that God would give us a world in which there is such rich diversity, not only at the sources of creation but also in the nature of humanity, that is not part of God's design.

Therefore, what we need to do as people of faith is articulate a theology that lifts that up, that affirms the nature of diversity that God has gifted us in ways that cause us to work intentionally at building intercultural communities. We're offering to you a small example of that. We believe it's part of a contribution that will help Canada understand that the work of this committee, our common work in combatting anti-Semitism, is part of a larger task of building a society in which we truly value the gifts of all people.

Thank you.

● (0835)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Niemi, if you wish, you may make your entire statement in French.

**Mr. Fo Niemi (Executive Director, Center for Research-Action on Race Relations):** Fine.

[English]

I'll try to do a simultaneous translation of what we have here.

[Translation]

But still, I will say a few words in French.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** We have interpretation, you do not need to repeat yourself.

**Mr. Fo Niemi:** That is fine, we have it already.

[English]

**The Chair:** Members can listen to the translation through an earpiece, if they wish.

[Translation]

**Mr. Fo Niemi:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, we would like to thank the committee for inviting us to share our observations and proposals on the fight against antisemitism in Canada.

A few words about CRARR: we are a small organization founded in 1983 and we are becoming more and more known in the fight against racism through our assistance to victims of discrimination in Montreal. Every year, we open roughly 100 files. Most of those files deal with racial discrimination, but more and more files deal with ethnic or religious-based discrimination. In addition, some 20% of our files deal with discrimination on other grounds.

This type of service gives us a much greater awareness of what is happening on the ground, particularly in public institutions and what we call civil society institutions.

We have some observations to make, particularly given the recent debate that has been unfolding in Quebec—since 2007—regarding the situation of ethnic and religious minorities in this province, among others. We believe that the fight against discrimination, and particularly against antisemitism, must include what is happening in Quebec and in Montreal, especially in a bilingual context.

And we really need an effective strategy in order to be able to reach out to Canadians and Quebeckers on the ground. By that I mean ordinary members of the public.

[English]

We have four major observations about the situation, which can affect, among other groups, the Jewish communities.

We believe that the recent debates in Quebec on reasonable accommodation, particularly the debate focusing on equality between men and women, as well as that concerning the place of religion in a public space, can increase—and some may say has increased—anti-Semitism.

Even though the debate is a form of social and political reaction to the Muslim presence, along with the claims of religious accom-

modations mostly from Muslim individuals, and even though some of these claims represent a media-manufactured crisis, we believe that in many ways the Jewish communities in Montreal might have become the collateral damage of the anti-Muslim and anti-Arabic or anti-immigrant feelings that are increasingly explicit and increasingly uncontained, especially on many talk shows and in more popular media fora.

The second observation is that there's the issue of ignorance and the perpetuation of stereotypes, particularly in the French talk shows and certain popular media, as well as a lack of daily contacts with people from different ethnic and religious and racialized backgrounds. This reinforces stereotypes because of, on the one hand, what we find to be the growing sensational character of many media debates, as well as the inability of reasonable, ordinary Quebeckers and Canadians as well as members of the affected groups to participate in or to reply to or to bring in their own perspectives in order to have a more balanced debate on the issue of, for example, the place of religion in a public space.

• (0840)

[Translation]

We see that, in some cases, indifference, silence or inaction on the part of the main social players—particularly in unions, culture and teaching—on the issues of minority rights and cultural diversity sometimes become part of the problem in perpetuating prejudices and discrimination.

For example, at the time of the firebomb attacks on Jewish and even Muslim institutions in Montreal, the union movement, the union leaders, who are always quite prepared to give their opinions on issues of social justice, remained quite silent at times. This creates a social climate within which cultural gaps or divides become deeper and solidarity is weakened.

We believe that the labour movement, in particular, has extraordinary challenges to meet. This is particularly important as the Jewish community, among others, is often not part of the decision-making in this environment, despite their history of contribution to the development of the labour movement throughout the last century.

We also see that the fight against antisemitism and other forms of intolerance, as presently led by political leaders, public institutions and NGOs, both Jewish and non-Jewish, is not adequately reaching the grassroots level in order to prevent people from developing prejudices and turning to discrimination.

We believe that, in many cases, there is a complete lack of mechanisms for dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration that are sustainable and will bear fruit at local or municipal level, thereby encouraging a reduction in social territoriality, ethno-centrism and cultural solitudes.

As an example, even within several community organizations working for what we call minority groups, such as people with disabilities, women's groups, seniors' groups, LGBT groups, there are not enough ethnically diverse participants or members to achieve a socio-community environment that is sensitive and conscious enough to deal with our national and international obligations in terms of human rights.

[English]

We suggest three main recommendations to strengthen the fight against anti-Semitism. We believe there need to be clear legal as well as sociological definitions and guidelines regarding the new faces of anti-Semitism, especially in the current global context, so as to allow a distinction and clear public understanding whenever debates on foreign policies or local domestic issues take place that have in our opinion a direct impact on the rights, interests, and aspirations of Jewish persons in this country.

We believe that the fight against anti-Semitism has to rely on the reinforcement of fundamental Canadian and Quebec values regarding diversity and equality, and the fight against anti-Semitism must go together with the reinforcement of a public national culture of human rights, because when the culture of human rights is weakened, minority rights will be weakened. We need to have a clear, coherent, and consistent approach to addressing human rights in light of both our Canadian laws and international laws.

We believe there needs to be a special focus on the need for education and information as well as specific attitudinal change training aimed at decision-makers and leaders of institutions that transmits values and knowledge. We believe we should focus not only on youth, since in many instances on college and university campuses as well as those in such contexts as certain union debates the issue is not one of dealing with minors or youths who lack information, but also on the need to re-establish certain historical as well as contemporary truths about social justice among other things.

Finally, we believe the fight against this evil must take place effectively and equally in French and in English. It needs to take into account the special dynamics of the French-speaking collectivity in Canada, particularly the distinct dynamics of Quebec society, while still emphasizing certain basic rules, such as the rule of law, and international law, which Canada has played a substantial role in shaping since 1948.

● (0845)

[Translation]

Recently, we published a series of recommendations that we could perhaps come back to a little later on.

There are several important elements: the debate on the place of religion, the perpetuation of stereotypes by the media—who often do not comply with codes of journalistic ethics—as well as the ability to carry on the fight against discrimination and intolerance in French. All these factors have to be taken into consideration in order to ensure that we will be able to reach our goal of fighting against antisemitism in this country's two official languages.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I want to thank all the witnesses for their presentations.

We will begin with Lois Brown.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you this morning. I apologize ahead of time that I have to leave almost immediately. I have another committee for which I have responsibilities, but I wanted to ask questions of Mr. Comper and Mr. Johnson, if I might.

I am very interested in hearing about the initiatives you have taken on education. I believe, as you do, that capturing and shaping those attitudes early in life is going to help us to resolve this problem in our society. We hope that by capturing and shaping those attitudes in children who are at a very young age, they will have an impact on their peer groups and on the people around them.

Between the two of you and the two initiatives, from what I've heard you saying, you must have spoken to many school boards by this time. I can only anticipate that school boards would be looking at one or the other rather than investing in both, so I'm hoping what I'm going to hear from you is that between the two of you, you have captured many school boards across Canada. Do you have any idea how many more schools or how many more classrooms we need to get into to get this material into the hands of teachers to use?

My follow-up question to that would be whether there is something that parliamentarians can be doing to have this discussion in our communities or to ensure that any time we have the opportunity to address these attitudes in the classroom or within the groups with whom we talk, there are opportunities to promote that.

Can you speak to either of those ideas?

**Mr. Tony Comper:** I don't know what the total universe is, but the approach we have taken is to make sure that the educational materials we have conform to the curriculum requirements of the different provinces. Doing that was a huge challenge. Even within one province you find that different school boards in different districts have slightly different nuances. However, having reached that point—because it does now conform to the curriculum requirements—we're not layering something on top of what the educators have to do. It fits right into their program, including one of the areas that we targeted, which was educating the educators. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has embraced the program and is using it to teach its teachers in training, who will then go out and use the materials.

We have had zero push-back actually from any of the school boards. They don't see this as an incremental something they have to do. Rather, in this day and age, when no one has an infinite number of resources, they are really embracing this, because it is a resource available at no cost to them and it fits right into the curriculum. This is now comprehensive in seven provinces. This year we'll be in two more and in one territory. That will leave us with just one province. So roughly speaking, I don't think we're at 70%. However, we're also seeing a significant amount of uptake in private schools, which is very encouraging, because it's not as though that's being mandated through a government-type program.

I don't know if that responds directly to your questions, but teachers aren't seeing it as something they have to do because it's being mandated by the provincial educators or even by their school boards.

● (0850)

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Mr. Johnson.

**Mr. Matthew Johnson:** We have also put a great deal of effort into making sure that all of our resources meet curricular standards for all of the provinces and territories, and that has led to a great deal of adoption of the different resources. We have essentially three different types of resources: we have teacher training or professional development resources; we have interactive classroom resources; and we also have lesson plans, which are available from our online lesson library. We know these have been taken up to a great extent by different schools and school boards. We know that our teacher training professional development programs are used in many schools. They are also used by many faculties of education in their teacher training. We know that our interactive resources receive heavy use and also that our lessons, indeed including the lessons that deal with hate, receive quite a lot of use by teachers in schools.

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Well, I think I'm going to have to read the material.

When I go into the classrooms—I accept every invitation offered to me to address grade 5 students—I want them to understand what the federal government does, and I speak to them in terms of the rules. What are the rules at home? What are the rules at school? What are the rules that we live by in society? If we can incorporate that into the rules they live by at school, then we can talk about the anti-bullying and the comments and so on.

Again, I'll have to take the initiative to read your material.

Thank you very much for being here this morning.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Brown.

Now we'll turn it over to Ms. Folco.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

This is a beautiful opportunity for those of us who have a lot of questions to ask. A maximum of five people only can ask questions today, and I do have a few questions.

First of all, to the representatives from the United Church of Canada, I am very happy to see you here today. We have talked some, but very little, about the religious roots of anti-Semitism. We've had a couple of clergymen, particularly from the Catholic Church. Although the Protestant churches weren't at the very basis of anti-Semitism historically—they came later—a number of things still happened. So it is very important to see you here.

On page 46 of your brief, you say that the church has in various forms “stated support for adherence to United Nations resolutions as the necessary path to a just peace in the region”.

Now, some of us believe very strongly that many, if not all, of the United Nations resolutions in the last few years have really been anti-Semitic at base. I would really appreciate your explaining what you mean by that statement.

**Mr. Bruce Gregersen:** What we're saying there is reflective of the actual policies that have been adopted by the church. In particular,

the ending of the occupation is fundamental to our understanding of that.

I think we'd agree that there are some parts of UN resolutions that are very problematic. For example, the right of return implies—

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Whose right of return?

**Mr. Bruce Gregersen:** The right of return of Palestinians to Palestinian original homelands; it implies effectively the end of the Jewish state because of demographic concerns.

Like any organization that is complex, you will find almost conflicting resolutions. I would think it would be fairly clear for us that our affirmation of the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state overrides other statements. While we historically have said affirmation of UN resolutions, we also would want to emphasize today—in the sense of needing to state accurately what our policies are—very distinct commitments to the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.

• (0855)

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I would strongly suggest that somewhere there be some kind of explanation such as the one you've just given us.

**Mr. Bruce Gregersen:** Thank you.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I don't want to be congratulating everybody here, but both Mr. Comper and Mr. Johnson have brought not a new aspect, really, but an answer to many of the questions the panel has had in the last several weeks. In the last several weeks, what we have heard from people is education, education, education: if you educate the children early enough, all will be well.

It is not my opinion. I've worked in human rights for many years. Although education does help, it definitely is not the answer.

What both of you have brought is another aspect to education that I appreciate very much. What we brought to witnesses before you came is the fact that the education children receive at school—I emphasize, they're children—has become a very small part of the general education and the opinions that they imbibe from everywhere else, from peer pressure, electronic media, parents obviously, and so on and so forth.

What you have brought to us here are some ways in which we can combat the peer pressure and sometimes the education they get at school. Let's face it, teachers have opinions, and sometimes these opinions are not to be congratulated.

I do have a small question. Maybe it's my English, but what is a tip line?

**Mr. Matthew Johnson:** A tip line is essentially a service that people can phone or otherwise contact, perhaps through e-mail or another means of communication, in order to indicate that they have come across hate material online.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** They are tipping somebody off. Okay.

What I particularly appreciated about both of your presentations and the materials you have produced is that, first of all, the process of producing the materials brought in a lot of people, which in itself is already very important, but also that once the materials were completed, you made sure they didn't stay on the shelf. I can tell you from personal experience, having produced these types of materials in Quebec, that once they're done, they stay on the shelf. It's a heck of a lot of hard work to get the teachers to see that they are not all that difficult to use, and you've answered that problem.

Mr. Johnson, I have a question for you. You talked about the limitations of trying to respond to online hate speech through the Canadian Human Rights Act. That is something you said in your brief. Could you explain that?

**Mr. Matthew Johnson:** Certainly the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code have their roles to play in fighting hate in general and online hate in particular. I'm certainly not here as an expert in legislation, but we do know that to begin with, dealing with the Criminal Code, much of the hate speech that is online doesn't meet the test for being a code offence. One of the problems with dealing with the human rights commission, from our point of view, is that it requires complaints to be made to it, and we know that, in general, youth who encounter hate material to begin with, as I've said, often don't recognize it. As well, one of our major concerns is that youth don't have the critical thinking skills to question what they encounter online, and they haven't been taught to recognize the forms of misinformation and the persuasive appeals that hate groups use.

To begin with, they don't necessarily recognize it, and we know also that they don't report it. In our survey, called "Young Canadians In A Wired World", we found that one-third of those respondents who reported having encountered hate material did nothing about it.

As well, we know that legislation applies only to hate material from Canadian sources. Obviously, it is incumbent on Parliament to fight hate material of Canadian origin, but the Internet is a very big place, and there are no borders on the Internet. So much of the hate material that young people will encounter simply cannot be fought by using the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

Finally, coming back to the issue that complaints have to be brought to the commission, there is simply too much content of all kinds, including hate material, for any organization to monitor. People are watching hundreds of millions of videos a day on YouTube, uploading hundreds of thousands of videos. According to YouTube itself, every minute, 20 hours of video is uploaded to YouTube. That's the reason, that even though YouTube has been very active in taking down hate material when it receives reports of it, there is still hate material that can easily be found there, and indeed, hate material that we have identified there has persisted for months simply because of the sheer size. You can imagine that YouTube has many people. It's a large organization. It's now part of Google. It has many people devoted to dealing with and resolving issues around content, possibly inappropriate content such as hate content. If it is not able to deal with the hate content that is being placed just there, that indicates that any other agency is, at best, going to have limited success at doing so.

Again, we certainly wouldn't say that it's not an important job for the Canadian Human Rights Commission to be doing. What we feel, though, is that young people need to be equipped with their own personal filters of critical thinking and of being able to recognize hateful content and to challenge it when they encounter it.

• (0900)

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I certainly agree with that.

Fo, do you want to add something about human rights to that?

**Mr. Fo Niemi:** The process is very long. It's very expensive personally as well as socially because complainants usually have to disclose their identity. Most of the hate websites, based on our experience, are run out of the United States, where freedom of speech rules, especially by some groups based in New Jersey, for example. I myself have been a target of hate and online violence, and have been called, for example, Jew lover for having spoken out against that.

I believe that we need, among other things, self-regulation on the part of the industry, as well as greater vigilance. Definitely there must be some sort of greater concerted international action, in which Canada should play a leadership role in bringing some other countries onboard, with regard to finding not necessarily legislative or legal ways but other ways to ensure the Internet is not a free-for-all, especially when it comes to advocacy of explicit hate and violence.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I have another question I'd like to come back to later.

**The Chair:** I'll put you on the list.

Mr. Sweet.

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I find all the testimony today compelling. I'm trying to isolate a few questions that would be the most important. That's a compliment to all of you. I really appreciate your testimony here.

One of the challenges with the Canadian Human Rights Commission that some of my colleagues and I have expressed as well is that the whole complaints process can also victimize people who in fact were not perpetrators of hate speech, and that's a concern as well. So you're trying to make sure that works effectively in stopping the perpetuation of hate and at the same time make sure that people who are innocent aren't victimized.

Mr. Gregersen and Madam Sanders, we had this incident with the motion about the boycott. I'm certain that you were expecting a question on that. There are two points I'd like to make on that. One is to ask whether you have had some conversation with the Jewish community since that incident happened in order to have some clarity on the circumstance.

Second, given some of the things I've heard, has the United Church of Canada called for a boycott? I know those motions were defeated, but it's my understanding, Mr. Gregersen—if the public record is right—that you told the individual congregations to take action. I'm just wondering if in the history of the United Church there have been other actions through which countries and countries' institutions have been boycotted.

● (0905)

**Ms. Nora Sanders:** Let me start with the first part, and then I'll ask Bruce to follow up on the second part.

Yes, there has been conversation with the Canadian Jewish Congress.

Just for the benefit of everybody, we had our general council last summer. That's our big meeting every three years, regarding all the governance things related to our church. There were about 178 proposals before the council, a couple of which related to Israel and Palestine, and of course those were the ones that captured the interest of the media.

Part of our practice is to have ecumenical and interfaith guests, so we did have a representative from the Canadian Jewish Congress at the meeting, Rabbi Bulka, who was eligible to speak and participate in discussions. We were very grateful to him for coming. We also had an imam present. We had a diverse group of people able to contribute to the discussion, and subsequently we've had informal conversations as well with the Canadian Jewish Congress.

My belief is that sometimes conversations are difficult to have, but that's all the more reason to continue having them. That's sort of our national discussion, but across the church there are many individual connections between congregations and synagogues in their neighbourhood and many different interfaith activities that take place.

The congregation I attend in Toronto had a series of interfaith events over a couple of years. One year we visited a synagogue, a mosque, different places of worship of others. The next year they came to visit us, and people learned about one another's faith. Really, what we learned was how much we have in common. So those are part of the ongoing practice of the church.

I'm going to let Bruce speak specifically to the proposals that were dealt with in the summer.

**Mr. Bruce Gregersen:** For the record, let me touch on some of the content of what did finally pass at the general council. I think it's important to understand that a number of foundational statements were made as part of that resolution. I want to just touch on a few of them.

The motion pointed to a number of things that would have to happen in order for "a just peace in the Middle East" to be achieved. These include the following:

The withdrawal of Israeli military forces to pre-1967 borders and ending all forms of collective violence by the Israeli Government on the Palestinian people;

The cessation of suicide bombings and other violent attacks directed towards Israeli civilians on the part of Palestinians;

The recognition by the emergent State of Palestine of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state within safe and secure borders;

Those were some of the preliminary statements.

What you're making reference to is the question of boycott. As we indicated at the time, the clear action of the council was not to take action on a national boycott. That was a critical statement to come out of that. I'll read to you this recommendation, which uses the language of boycott:

Recommend that the United Church Conferences, Presbyteries, congregations and community ministries immediately enter into consultation, dialogue, study and prayer, and then to take appropriate action toward ending the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, and enter into conversation

—I think this is absolutely critical, and it was a fairly significant part of the debate—

as to how to move the two peoples toward reconciliation (including, but not limited to economic boycott).

As part of the debate that took place at that point, I think the language of "how to move the two peoples toward reconciliation" was a critical part of that resolution.

We have not called for a national boycott. We have encouraged congregations to act, discern, study, and to take action as they determine the appropriate way to do that.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Gregersen.

Mr. Johnson, you didn't mention a specific statistic, but you said you had a high take-up of your program.

Are you monitoring that, Mr. Comper? Do you have any idea of the percentage of schools—in a province like Ontario, let's say—that would actually be picking up your material? I know you said there was no push-back, but do you have an idea about the success of it in terms of total school boards?

● (0910)

**Mr. Tony Comper:** I would draw your attention to pages 26 and 27 in the package that was submitted to the committee. Those statistics are kind of outlined there. If we look at Ontario to June of 2009....

I'd have to add these up, but the statistics are all there on pages 26 and 27.

**Mr. David Sweet:** So we have them on record.

**Mr. Tony Comper:** Yes, we do.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Great.

Mr. Niemi, you mentioned in your testimony that you'd have more recommendations for this committee that you'd get to later. Would you like to give us a couple more of the recommendations you were referring to?

**Mr. Fo Niemi:** One of the recommendations is that where the federal government is concerned, we need to have an effective messenger, a promoter, a communicator, who can communicate with French-speaking Canadians and francophones everywhere in Canada on this issue. Historically, especially in dealing with multiculturalism, most ministers have been English speaking.

We also suggest not only a parliamentary mechanism but also an inter-ministerial structure to oversee the annual evaluation and review of all the efforts designed to combat anti-Semitism and racism to ensure that there are effective indicators of performance and outcomes. One thing the Bouchard-Taylor commission in Quebec found was that despite millions of dollars poured into so-called educational and sensitization programs, ordinary people had not been reached in terms of enlightenment about people with different ethnic backgrounds.

That is very puzzling. After all these years and millions of dollars spent on bringing people together, on educating people on prejudice, on doing public hearings with the Bouchard-Taylor commission, there are still so many outbursts of “anti” this and “anti” that—pure ignorance, vile ignorance—that it should force us to pause and ask where we didn't do things right.

We also suggest that there should be support for ways to ensure that municipalities, school boards, and human rights commissions have a greater educational role in promoting human rights awareness at the local level. Our concern is the daily local context in which these things happen, because that's where we reach ordinary people.

One of the recommendations includes how to engage leaders of civil society, mostly in the labour unions, in the educational system—not necessarily high school, but colleges and universities—and in the cultural sector. We believe that to reach the masses, we need to go through popular cultural media, be it music or any other form, such as poetry for urban communities, as a way to get the message across.

We're concerned that often the work has been focused on what we call the “elite”, or the “opinion makers”. That's important, but how do we get it to the base? When we listen to talk radio or any other sort of popular media forms, we realize that the message hasn't gotten through.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Madam Folco.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Thank you.

We've talked about very young children. We've talked about teenagers. I think a lot more work could be done with teenagers, perhaps through the media, as Mr. Johnson has suggested. But we haven't talked about the organized ethnic societies in Canada. Generally speaking, we take for granted that it's the whole society that is anti-Semitic. In fact, my experience has been that there are very strong anti-Semitic sentiments in many of the former immigrant groups that have come here to Canada.

I just wondered whether you had any suggestion on what could be done in terms of waking them up to the danger of perpetuating....

Let me tell you my experience in this. I found that when one talked to the immigrant groups, they were unwilling...and I'm not necessarily talking about recent immigrants. We could talk about people who have come from the Middle East, for example, but that's not really what I'm talking about. I'm talking about older immigrant groups, groups that are now fully integrated into Canadian society

and who have really perpetuated within their ranks this anti-Semitic sometimes notion of killers of God and so on and so forth.

I wondered what you would suggest in terms of the kind of outreach we might do with them.

• (0915)

**Mr. Matthew Johnson:** I'm sorry, who is that question for?

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** It's for whoever feels competent to answer it.

**Mr. Tony Comper:** Let me start. The assumption we have made is that the most effective way—because it's quite a broad spectrum, and you could wind up boiling the ocean if you aren't careful—is to do it through the school system.

Having said that, there is a lacuna in that, which is that under our federal structure, the school system is run by the provinces, with the huge exception of schools for young people on reserves. The aboriginal kids are not embraced by the provincial education system. They come under INAC. So one of the things that we have in our work plan for 2010 is to do a pilot project on some of the aboriginal schools.

Our early discovery, though, is that reaching the aboriginal children is not necessarily done most effectively through putting our resources into the reserves, but rather through concentrations of the population in the provincial school systems. That's not exactly what you were asking.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** No, but aboriginals are part of Canadian society, too.

**Mr. Bruce Gregersen:** Thank you.

A number of years ago, I had the opportunity over a period of years to travel throughout the country with a senior Muslim leader who worked with us. We visited most of the major cities in Canada and went to most of the mosques, some recent mosques and some older ones, and invited Christian representatives from a number of different communities to have meetings in these mosques.

In a number of cases in those situations, some of the Muslim leaders indicated that it was one of the first times that they'd had an opportunity to meet representatives of the Christian community in their space. That's just an example to really invite you to not dismiss the role of religious communities.

In addition to all of the other initiatives that I think need to be taken, there need to be ways of ensuring or helping religious communities to build interconnections between communities at a grassroots level, at the level of a worshipping community. That is often the place where anti-Semitism originates, and the experience of actually meeting face to face can be transformative and dramatic.

**Mr. Fo Niemi:** I would suggest very strong human rights education as part of newcomers' education on Canada, along the lines of “thou shall not discriminate, thou shall not commit hate crimes”—because some of the recent incidents in Montreal involve new immigrants who carry the old prejudices about Jews.

One of the most important things is that people need to understand the obligation with regard to fundamental human rights values, because we cannot really disassociate anti-Semitism from the fight against other forms of intolerance. For example, we talk a lot about gender equality in Quebec, but we also need to talk about the fact that in Canada there are certain human rights obligations in terms of non-discrimination, and we need to talk about what a hate crime is. More important, that's why we suggest a strong educational campaign about what anti-Semitism in the contemporary context is.

One can have all kinds of ideas about foreign policy on the issue of Israel, but one has to understand where one crosses the line. Unfortunately for a lot of people, they don't understand what they don't want to understand.

The last point I think is that a lot of immigrants or newcomers go through at least English language or French language training, and in many of these training programs, those human rights values are not well taught. Because most of them are adults, they go through colleges and universities, and again there, certain human rights values are not well taught.

In some universities we've seen a lot of activities run by student groups that create what we think can be deemed a racially or ethnically poisoned environment for Jewish students and professors. Again, this is where college and university administrators should be informed of their human rights obligations to ensure a harassment-free learning and educational environment.

• (0920)

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Fo, you're leading me into the question that I was going to ask you in any case.

Many years ago when I worked with the Quebec government, one of the things that I discussed with the minister was the fact that we had to make it clear to people who arrived in Canada that there were limits to what we in Quebec call reasonable accommodation. These limits had not been clearly articulated, but these limits were the values of Quebec and Canadian society. This hasn't been made clear, and I want to put on record that this is something we ought to work on.

Having heard what you just said, Fo, I'd next like to ask you about the "new anti-Semitism". You've heard the term "new anti-Semitism" as opposed to the religion-based anti-Semitism of the old days. The first question is an abrupt question. Do you think this kind of anti-Semitism exists in Quebec, and would you like to say a few words about it?

**Mr. Fo Niemi:** It certainly does exist in some sectors of Quebec society, whether it's in debates or groups that are actively involved in foreign policies or international development. We've seen it during what was, I believe, a sort of march against the "attack on Lebanon" in 2006.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** The Hezbollah march.

**Mr. Fo Niemi:** Yes, you can call it that, but obviously there were evident symbols in public places to that effect.

The other growing tendency, we feel, is that in English Canada people have not been aware of that great intellectual challenge. It's this whole debate about the place of religion in public places, or in

public spaces, whereby the framework for discussion of these issues relies on what is going on in France.

There is this whole debate about national identity and a total ban of every religious symbol in public spaces. There's no intellectual counter-response to this model, which in our opinion is very contrary to Canadian values and to historic traditions, if not cultural traditions. There is this whole debate that Jewish doctors can't wear any symbols of—

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I think you should explain that a little more fully.

**Mr. Fo Niemi:** I'm sorry?

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I think you should explain a little more what you're talking about.

**Mr. Fo Niemi:** Okay.

Well, in Quebec right now, there is a growing tendency, a growing movement, even with political pressure, for the government to adopt a charter of secularism that will ban all religious symbols in public spaces, from schools to universities to...except crosses, because some people would say that the crosses or the Catholic heritage is part of the historical or cultural heritage.

Now, this is an interesting intellectual debate, of course, because it reflects certain historical as well as sociological movements and dynamics of Quebec society. It's healthy to have that debate. Where it is not very healthy is in the growing movement toward the creation of a hierarchy of rights, in which minority rights or human rights are not recognized as a fundamental Quebec value. As a small-l liberal democracy, I think we should pause to reflect on that.

The second thing we are concerned about is that in every debate, especially when a debate touches upon any group, that group should be there to have an equal voice, to be heard, to be seen, and to bring their perspectives. Because many of these debates take place in a very homogeneous sector—the community sector, the labour sector—those minority groups whose rights are most affected are not there. We believe this is a debate the committee should take into consideration.

We're not saying it's alarming, but we are saying that we need to find ways to ensure that the debate on gender equality and the place of religion in public spaces does not contribute to this definition of what we may call another form of new anti-Semitism. According to the popular media, whenever there's a media representation of Jews, it's always the Hasidic stereotype. For a lot of people who have no personal contacts or connections with people of Jewish faith, this is what they see, and this is what they're going to react to very negatively.

• (0925)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Given that we have two more minutes, I'll use my prerogative as the chair to ask some questions. Even though I play a neutral role, I still like to at least get some understanding.

I very much want to thank all of the witnesses, particularly on the issue of education. I think it's very important. Also, the issue of dialogue and harmony with the faith groups is equally important.

But I just want to get some clarification from the witnesses who are here from the United Church. I guess one would argue there is no problem with criticizing a country's human rights. I don't think there would be any problem with the United Church questioning or having issues with human rights in Israel.

I want to get your opinion, though, on the concern that has been expressed specifically on the issue of singling out a specific country, not everybody else. I mean, if you look at the human rights abuses that are taking place in Burma, in Zimbabwe, and at how religious minorities are being persecuted all over Africa, the Middle East, and China—we can go through a whole list of countries. When one just specifically targets one country and says “this is a violation of human rights”.... Also, I must say that on self-determination of peoples, you can find it all over the world, from the Kurds to the Baluchis, and in all sorts of different minorities and national groups. It's not just a question of self-determination.

But by singling out Israel specifically in the boycott, are you not afraid of appearing to be siding with all of those who actually hate the Jewish state?

**Ms. Nora Sanders:** Well, I would challenge the notion that we've singled out any particular country. In the past, we've had commentary about things in many parts of the world. Israel and Palestine are currently one area of focus, as are the Philippines. We've brought people from the Philippines to Ottawa. We've brought people from Colombia to Ottawa to do with injustices there.

We work through Christian partners in those different places. It happens that in Jerusalem, the Christian partners are Palestinian almost by definition; when we visit the Lutheran bishop or the Catholic bishop or the Anglican bishop, those are Palestinian people. Of course through those partnerships we hear those stories.

We similarly have partnerships in the Philippines. We hear of people being murdered there for their Christian faith. We work closely with them. In Colombia as well, where people of faith are at risk of their lives, we work closely with them.

**The Chair:** Ms. Sanders, my question has to do more with the issue of the boycott. I understand that you can speak about different issues of human rights in different countries, but have you also asked for a boycott...?

I guess if Israel were part of a boycott listing ten or twenty different countries, you couldn't necessarily make the argument that it was being singled out. But when only one country is being singled out and not the others, that—

**Ms. Nora Sanders:** Let me just step back and explain a bit of our polity, of how we work as a church.

In terms of the 178 or so proposals that we ended up with at general council, a portion of them came from our executive, a portion of them came from me—primarily technical things to do with revising our manual—and a portion of them came from people wherever, across the church, up through the regional groups. It just depended on what people out there across the church were working on and bringing forward.

The proposals that came forward to general council relating to Israel and Palestine came from local groups who'd brought them to the national body. I think that's why you see them being reshaped so

significantly once they come to the national gathering of the United Church, where many different points of view are brought to bear.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Comper.

**Mr. Tony Comper:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to supplement that by saying—this is to your point as well—that I think you've actually hit on a very important point, and that's what I characterize as the new anti-Semitism; just because you're opposed to Israeli policies doesn't make you an anti-Semite. Unfortunately, the debate going on in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine, etc., is air cover for those who *are* anti-Semites.

When you look at the proportionality of criticism, whether it be at the UN or elsewhere, you have to come to the inescapable conclusion that there is a disproportionate weight against Israel and not others. If you were being even-handed, you would think there'd be a broader discussion of that.

How do you parse out those who are anti-Semites? It's very difficult. As I said, being opposed to Israeli policies is not being anti-Semitic. Most of the opposition to Israeli policies comes from within Israel, within their Parliament. It's a very dangerous thing, and it allows people to engage in a debate where ostensibly it's about Israel and Palestine, but in reality it's about anti-Semitism, in my view.

● (0930)

**The Chair:** I think Mr. Gregersen wants to make a comment to that.

**Mr. Bruce Gregersen:** I think the essence of anti-Semitism is of course based in hatred, but it's also based in the desire to end Jewish identity and existence. That's in its most extreme form, but it's an undercurrent of what anti-Semitism is about.

So the line is crossed, I think, in respect to criticism of Israel when the intention is to end the existence of Israel. How you determine that or parse that is complex, but I think if an individual organization is focused solely on challenging Israel to the extent that it raises questions about the existence of Israel, and possibly also as a Jewish homeland, then I think you have there a source of anti-Semitism.

We'd argue, I think, that our intentions and our approaches have been much broader than that, but we've also affirmed very clearly, and I think as straightforwardly as possible, the continued existence of Israel as a Jewish state.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that clarification.

Go ahead, Mr. Johnson.

**Mr. Matthew Johnson:** Perhaps I could just speak to that for a moment.

I just think this really shows the importance of teaching critical thinking skills and skeptical habits of mind. Hate groups of all kinds employ a variety of blinds, from nationalism to criticism of particular issues. It shows just how important it is that all people, but particularly young people, learn to be able to recognize hate speech and to distinguish between legitimate debate and hate speech when they encounter it.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Please give a brief comment, Mr. Niemi.

**Mr. Fo Niemi:** It's not only about the boycott but also about the concept of Israeli apartheid. We've seen it on a lot of college campuses. We've even seen it recently in Montreal in a gay pride march, in which there was a big contingency group working against Israeli apartheid.

We know that in the francophone gay community in Montreal, people weren't even aware of what that was all about, so we had to bring people together with the Quebec Jewish Congress basically just to have an exchange between NGOs about what that was all about in order to provide a very peaceful, very subtle counter-reaction to this movement. I can tell you that in many French-speaking sectors, especially in universities, people don't even understand what that term implies.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I want to thank the members and the witnesses, of course, for being here.

I should have pointed out yesterday to the members that we have Elliot Conway here from the U.K. Elliot is the director of the Parliamentary Committee Against Antisemitism. I mentioned in my meeting with Elliot yesterday that Tony Comper was honoured at the Negev dinner last night. He and his wife Elizabeth, who is a teacher, were also honoured by B'nai Brith.

You also mentioned, in your speech, the book *Globalising Hatred*, by Denis MacShane. Denis was the chair of the inquiry in the U.K. and also the first person to appear as a witness before our committee.

I thank all of you very much for that. We appreciate your remarks.

We will have a five-minute break and then we will start again. Thank you.

• (0930) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (0940)

**The Chair:** I will ask members to take their seats.

Good morning. I want to thank the witnesses for being here.

We also have an additional witness, Imam Salam Elmenyawi, who is on his way. We've had some problems with individuals going through security, but hopefully that will be resolved and we'll get going.

We have with us Moïse Moghrabi, Quebec chair, League for Human Rights, B'nai Brith Canada, Quebec Region, and Alia Hogben, executive director, Canadian Council of Muslim Women. As I mentioned, hopefully the imam will be here soon.

We will start with Moïse.

[Translation]

**Mr. Moïse Moghrabi (Chair, League for Human Rights, Quebec Region, B'nai Brith Canada):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Moïse Moghrabi and I am the Chair of the Quebec League for Human Rights, B'nai Brith Canada.

First of all, both personally and on behalf of the league, I thank you for giving us the opportunity to present our comments during this consultation.

The Human Rights League monitors and intervenes in cases of any abuse of human rights. It is devoted to the fight against manifestations of antisemitism, racism and intolerance. For 27 years now, our...

• (0945)

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Mario Silva):** Could you wait a moment, so that Ms. Alia Hogben can put on her headset?

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** May I make a comment, Mr. Chair?

If the witness keeps speaking so quickly, the interpreters will not have time to translate his comments. He is going to have to speak a little more slowly.

**Mr. Moïse Moghrabi:** For 27 years, our league has been collecting data and publishing an annual report on incidents of antisemitism in Canada. The document lists the incidents of antisemitism by region and analyzes the trends it observes. This is the most serious and credible study on the issue in this country. It is also recognized around the world and consulted and quoted by government agencies, police services and Statistics Canada.

We recognize that antisemitism is only one aspect of the greater scourge of intolerance and racism that affects our society. However, antisemitism is a very specific and extreme case which often manages to rob people of their humanity. In any fight against antisemitism and racism, the fundamental and obvious role of those in power is to send a moral, just and appropriate vision of their society to their people and to make them aware of multiculturalism so that tolerance can be an important and effective counterweight to racism and antisemitism.

In this short presentation, I will speak specifically and exclusively about the province of Quebec. Quebec is the province with the second highest number of antisemitic incidents in Canada, the highest being in Ontario. Of the 1,135 cases reported in Canada in 2008, 245 took place in Quebec. In 2007, the number was 291 out of 1,042; in 2006, it was 226 out of 935. To give you a better overall appreciation, in 2002, the total number of incidents in Canada was 459. To put these figures into perspective, we provide an annual reminder in our reports on antisemitic incidents that police and sociologists agree that only 10% of victims of abuse of any kind report the attacks they have been subjected to. So the figures in our reports only reflect 10%, which gives you an idea of the scope of the problem.

While traditional systemic antisemitism in Quebec has all but disappeared and the majority of Quebecers have renounced their traditional antisemitism, the new antisemitism remains a persistent threat for the Jewish community, and the number of antisemitic acts continues to increase over the years, as you have seen in the figures I have provided.

In fact, 2009 was unfortunately a very busy year for the league, and our antiracism line was flooded with calls reporting incidents, assaults, antisemitic graffiti, including swastikas and other Nazi emblems. In addition, in September, several Montreal synagogues were vandalized at the same time. September, of course, marks the beginning of the period of Jewish religious celebrations.

The detailed report of antisemitic events in Canada for 2009 will unfortunately not be available before the beginning of 2010, when we have finished collecting the data and verifying all the information. We are still seeing an increase in incidents during specific catalyst events, and these are not always international incidents.

In Quebec, we had an example of an catalyst event with the 2007 public hearings of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences. The mandate of this commission was to study the socio-cultural integration model established in Québec since the 1970s and to review interculturalism, immigration, secularism and the theme of Québec identity. Unfortunately, the consultations served as a platform for the public expression of racism towards minorities in the province, including the Jewish community. The attempt to hold a public debate, which could have been very productive, resulted in a significant increase in the number antisemitic incidents, particularly when the commission's hearings were in full swing. The public hearings were at times transformed into truly racist statements openly delivered by some participants, giving the false impression that the majority of Quebecers tolerate a certain level of racism. The league is seriously concerned about the repercussions of such a perception because I can tell you that tolerating intolerance just encourages that kind of behaviour and also gives the erroneous perception that such attitudes are socially acceptable. But the hearings did allow one Quebec reality to be exposed: that the basis of antisemitic sentiment is not rooted in traditional beliefs but rather in an overall rejection of any form of religion.

• (0950)

In fact, the wholesale rejection of religion as a mainstay in their lives by Quebecers results in a certain antipathy towards religious explanations of any kind. The Jewish community, which is absolutely defined by its religion, goes against Quebecers' desire to escape...

[English]

**Mr. David Sweet:** The interpreter just said that the speaker will need to either slow down or provide a copy of his notes, because they can't keep up with the rate of his speech.

[Translation]

**Mr. Moise Moghrabi:** The wholesale rejection of religion as a mainstay in their lives by Quebecers results in a certain antipathy towards religious explanations of any kind. The Jewish community, which is absolutely defined by its religion, goes against Quebecers' desire to escape from the bonds of religion. The antisemitic discourse heard throughout the hearings of the commission therefore flowed from an opposition to all forms of accommodation. It was not because of the nature of the accommodation being requested, but rather because of the religious justifications underlying the requests. The media coverage, which was excessive and poorly balanced, not to say downright specious, served only to exacerbate the manifestations of public discontent.

But for the majority of Quebecers who have rejected traditional antisemitism, another problem is their refusal to admit that the problem still exists. Despite their goodwill, a part of the population

genuinely fails to see that there is still a problem. Unfortunately, if you cannot recognize that a problem exists, it is difficult to rectify it.

At the same time, Quebec, like Canada, has opened its doors wide to immigration. Where the immigrants come from affects societal dynamics more and more. Since the 1970s, in fact, some of Quebec's immigrants have brought with them cultures and traditions that are sometimes incompatible with the human rights that are championed in Canada. These immigrants sometimes come from countries or regions where there is simply no respect for human rights. Even worse, in some of these countries, the public expression of prejudices and antisemitism is not only tolerated but encouraged, sanctioned and even taken up by the states and the media themselves.

This prejudice and antisemitism they have brought with them is slowly influencing the young people in our universities where they meet these new immigrants. Obviously, this new antisemitism is not always open. Often, it is very subtle and veiled by criticisms that are intended to make the Jewish community responsible for a political reality overseas. The promoters of this new antisemitism hide behind barely credible semantics in order to pretend that they are not antisemitic. Unfortunately, the people who participate in such discourse seem, as Professor Frédéric Guillaume Dufour would say, to somewhat naively believe that, by doing away with the term "antisemitism", we can do away with antisemitism itself.

In a nutshell, this is part of the dynamic and the nature of antisemitism in Quebec today. The problem is obviously very real and changes with the various movements that, for their own reasons, are working together to spread their antisemitism. There is unfortunately no miracle solution. This is a long-term fight. The problem must first of all be officially recognized by government authorities at every level and it must be resolutely and aggressively denounced in public. This must be clearly explained to new arrivals and to those who have been here a little longer. They must be made to understand how antisemitism and racism are contrary to the fundamental principles of our society and to the moral, just and appropriate vision of our country. In this regard, we feel that the Canadian government is on the right track with the new guide for immigrants.

Furthermore, Canada already subscribes to the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime that deals with the criminalization of acts of a racist or xenophobic nature committed through computer systems. Canada ratified it in 2005. This protocol requires signatory states to adopt legislation and the necessary measures in order to criminalize the distribution and making available to the public racist or xenophobic material through computer systems, intentionally and without right. Similarly, it requires member states to pass legislation that would cover racist insults and threats. Canada should be inspired by other signatory states who have taken measures on a national level to counter the various forms of online hate.

Finally, the government initiative to implement the pilot program on the funding of infrastructure projects for the safety of communities at risk, even though it is unfortunate that this is necessary, has been very useful for Jewish institutions, in particular, who are often targeted by antisemitic acts. It has greatly contributed to their safety, or, at very least, to their feeling of safety in this country.

• (0955)

We believe that the government must extend this new pilot program again and even make it permanent.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your presentation.

[*English*]

Imam Salam Elmenyawi, thank you very much for being here.

We're going to go first with Madam Alia Hogben and then you. Thank you, and welcome.

Alia.

**Mrs. Alia Hogben (Executive Director, Canadian Council of Muslim Women):** Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to address this august committee of parliamentarians.

I have to assume that you have had an opportunity to review information about our organization, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, as well as our submission of August 26. Your staff kindly forwarded a list of possible questions that the panel might ask of us, and I think this is a good start for our discussion today.

Before I address the questions, I want to state clearly that we are not speaking as Canadian Muslims here, but rather we raise these issues as concerned citizens of Canada and of the global community.

CCMW was asked to elaborate on an example that we used in our submission to the UN Resolutions on Combating Defamation of Religions. We raised this example because there are similarities between what you are trying to do and this resolution, for example, if you substitute the word "state" in place of "religions".

In March 2009 the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution urging the creation of laws in member states to prevent criticism of religions and forms of belief. One of the major organizations that campaigned for this resolution was the OIC, which is the Organisation of The Islamic Conference. We appreciate the intent of the resolution, but we as an organization of believing Canadian Muslim women, along with a number of other organizations, object to this resolution.

For example, a joint declaration was released by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Their declaration states:

The concept of 'defamation of religions' does not accord with international standards regarding defamation, which refer to the protection of reputation of individuals, while religions, like all beliefs, cannot be said to have a reputation of their own.

Canada objected by stating that it is individuals who have rights, not religions. Canada believes that to extend the notion of

defamation beyond its proper scope would jeopardize the fundamental right to freedom of expression, which includes religious subjects.

The European Union spoke against the resolution as well. They said that defamation of religions is not a valid concept in human rights discourse. From a human rights perspective, members of religious or belief communities should not be viewed as part of homogeneous entities. International human rights laws protect individuals rather than religions as such.

Those who objected shared the concern that this can lead to silencing and intimidating human rights defenders, religious minorities, and other dissenters. It can restrict freedom of expression, because any criticism of laws and customs in religious contexts will be seen as an attack against religion.

Our organization's submission stated that due to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Canada has mechanisms to protect individuals from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and religion. We added that to have extra safeguards for a specific community would be unfair and would open the floodgates to other religious groups asking for similar protection.

We are being asked what happens when these rights are not protected even under the charter. My question back to you is, which rights do you think are not protected? If there are gaps in our system of human rights protection, then it is a task for politicians such as you to correct it. Any gaps would affect all of us, so why would we go beyond these to specific groups or minorities?

I will give you the example of our struggle against religious laws in family arbitration. As Muslim women and families, we did not see the practice of religious laws as part of our identity. We wanted the same rights and freedoms as our fellow Canadians, not special treatment for whatever reasons. We did not want arguments about cultural relativism so that we should be treated differently from other Canadian women.

The third question being asked is on where you would draw the line between free speech and hateful or harmful speech. There is a line, and it has been drawn in human rights discourse, but this does not mean there is general agreement or that it is a closed topic.

• (1000)

I am no expert on defining various terms, but Professor of Sociology Joanne Naiman differentiates between prejudice and discrimination. Prejudice includes attitudes of dislike and hostility towards a group of people. This includes hateful speech. Discrimination is the denial of equal treatment or opportunities to these individuals. This is harmful.

I add that propagating hate and inciting violence will affect my ability to practice my rights and will curtail my opportunities for employment or housing or education. I would like protection from this hatred, which would restrict my rights as a full citizen. I have never believed that sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me.

The fourth question is, what are our recommendations regarding combatting anti-Semitism in Canada while upholding the right to free speech?

Combatting anti-Semitism in Canada is the same as combatting any kind of prejudice and discrimination against any individual or group. We strongly recommend that in fighting any prejudice and discrimination, we should be inclusive and not fragment Canadians by one aspect of our identities, whether it be religion, race, or ethnicity.

Let me give you an example of freedom of speech or the spread of hate. *Maclean's* magazine published an article by Mark Steyn about the increase of Muslims in Europe and in North America. It was a diatribe against Muslims, and it did fan hysteria and fear against Muslims.

Was Steyn's article about freedom of speech, or was it a speech that incited discrimination and affected the lives of Canadian Muslims? Did what Steyn wrote cause fear and make non-Muslims apprehensive of their Muslim neighbours?

All of this did happen. For me, though, what Steyn wrote and the conclusions he drew were hurtful. His motives were suspect. But he had the right to freedom of speech. I think one must assess the harm and hate effects on people. However, I would err on the side of freedom of expression.

Fifth, how does one distinguish between legitimate criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism?

Let us for an instant imagine that this committee was set up on the underlying assumption that any criticism of Saudi Arabia or Iran was Islamophobic. What would this lead to? Does it not intimidate and silence any open discussion of those states?

Similarly, the London Declaration, on which the committee is basing its work, states that calls for the destruction of the state of Israel are inherently anti-Semitic. I for one accept the existence of the state of Israel; it's not an issue for me. However, this statement does silence people, because no one wants to be targeted as being anti-Semitic.

There are many Jews within Israel and in other parts of the world who are critical of some of the policies and actions of that state. Is it fair to label them as "SHIT"—self-hating, Israel-threatening Jews—as Masada has done? Does this not silence people?

There should be a distinction between legitimate criticism of an independent state in an international arena. Any state's actions should be open to questions and challenges.

We have criticized the U.S. government for its action in Iraq, but this does not translate into any hatred of Americans as a people.

Similarly, we have criticized Saudi Arabia and Iran, but this does not in any way mean that we are anti-Muslim or anti-Islam.

Then there was the shunning by other states of South Africa because of its practice of apartheid. This cannot be seen as something that encouraged anti-white or anti-African sentiments.

We have the example of Quebec, which wants to secede. This would certainly dramatically alter and jeopardize the very nation of Canada, but surely we don't see this as a reason to decry the people of Quebec or to take action against the province.

I conclude with my own questions to you.

I have read your material, but I'm still puzzled about what rationale was used for the formation of such a high-powered political committee that combats not all discrimination and prejudice but is focusing only on anti-Semitism.

As well, I see that your next step is to send a report of this committee to Parliament. I hope that report will also be made available publicly.

We all know this poem about hate and discrimination, with its message that we cannot remain silent because we may be next.

•(1005)

Martin Niemöller, a Protestant pastor who was in the Dachau concentration camp for four years, wrote:

When the Nazis came for the communists,  
I remained silent;  
I was not a communist.  
When they locked up the social democrats,  
I remained silent;  
I was not a social democrat.  
When they came for the trade unionists,  
I did not speak out;  
I was not a trade unionist.  
When they came for the Jews,  
I remained silent;  
I was not a Jew.  
When they came for me,  
there was no one left to speak out.

Thank you for your attention.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your presentation.

Imam Salam Elmenyawi, go ahead, please.

**Imam Salam Elmenyawi (Muslim Chaplain, McGill University):** Good morning, and thank you for giving me this opportunity to be here today with you to reflect on something that is very important for all of us within our society.

In the last two decades in Montreal, I have worked quite a lot together with people from different faith backgrounds to try to get a little bit more understanding and to get people to know each other and to reflect on ways of combatting hate, xenophobia, prejudices, and discrimination.

I think we have done quite a bit, and we have been very successful as we have done what we have done in Montreal, and have not just come before the media to give some idea that maybe communities are working together, but have acted very sincerely in trying to connect one another within our society.

Today we have heard about a few different issues. Most of those who spoke before me, according to the views that I have heard, seem to have discussed most of the issues that I wanted to address. Let me approach the matter in a little bit of a different way.

My first question is how we define anti-Semitism. Looking on the Internet, I found a number of definitions. I'll just mention a few of them: "the intense dislike for and prejudice against Jewish people"; "a term used to describe prejudice against or hostility towards Jews, often rooted in hatred of their religious/cultural/ethnic background"; "hostility toward or prejudice against Jews as a religious, ethnic, or racial group, which can range from individual hatred to institutionalized, violent persecution". There is one more, from the ADL website: "This term refers to the hatred of Jews, which goes back to before Christian times".

So, in short, it is all about hate. I think this all boils down to the idea that in order for us to confront hate, we must learn about it. I have looked at hate right in the face. I have done quite a bit of work in relation to this issue. The one thing that we can all agree on is the fact that hate is a disease, and a very contagious disease, but it is not always caused by the same virus. There are different strains of hate, and we must be very careful as we prescribe our medication not to always give the same medication to all the strains of hate. Otherwise, we lose, because that means we're either overmedicating our society or we're going to skip things and we're not going to be able to address issues of importance.

There are ardent haters, there are people who are copycats, and there are people who do not necessarily know much about those whom they hate. All they need is to get a bit more information, because they have probably been living in ignorance and have not had much exposure.

We must be able to recognize that there are different types of hate, and we must be able to look at some of these issues if we would like to address the issue of anti-Semitism or hate in general. To reflect quickly on this—and I know I don't have much time to get into some of these issues in a 10-minute submission—I'd just like to say we should be able to differentiate between those different strains. Having to make laws and criminalize all hate is not necessarily the answer. We must address the ardent haters, the copycats, and the ignorant xenophobes in different ways.

Hate is contagious. Therefore, any kind of hate or haters produce more haters and more kinds of hate. We can look into this in relation to the broken window syndrome, for example. The theory goes that if you have a broken window and you don't fix it, you'll get another broken window and another broken window, and you'll end up having most of your windows broken.

The idea, as we address the issue of hate, is that if we address or fix only one window, we will never be able to keep it fixed. It will get broken again and again. So if we address only one kind of hate or hate against only one specific group of people and we leave the others and do not confront them in the same strong way, then we are bound to always have a broken window. It doesn't matter what we do.

•(1010)

Also, I think there is an issue that is very, very important that we should look at as we address this hate issue. It is what is called the theory of the tipping point; the tipping point actually is a look at society whenever there are hot issues. There are those in society who have special agendas and who come in to try to tip the balance towards having people create more hatred within society, or create a

lot more problems, or fabricate crises within society in order for them to actually advance their own interests.

These kinds of tipping points also must be addressed in such a way that asks how we can cool down society when we find issues that start to heat it, to boil it, before we reach this kind of tipping point principle. I think you can relate to this very well, as this is very much what happened to the Jews before the Second World War, with the tipping point that brought that hate into violence by addressing this specific group of people in a way that was unprecedented in history, by killing them or expelling them from their homes. I think we must address these issues as we look at the cure.

We also should never forget to recognize the pain of the victims of hate, whether they are Jews, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, or anyone else within society. If we try to put the focus on only one specific type of pain and recognize it all the time, I think we will also again miss this, because it is part of getting this kind of interaction with people in a way that will bring harmony and serenity within society. It would require us, certainly, to address all the root causes and all the difficult problems we may face within this society, so that we can try to uproot hate and bridge this system of discrimination.

Also, we must look at the varieties of hate. There are different varieties of hate incidents that take place. There are different kinds of hate, and with all the different colours, this has to be handled in different ways as we come to combatting hate.

Then there are the victims. We must address the victims, how to take care of them, and how we can help them, because hate is very painful. It's very harmful. People suffer because of hate, and not just because of violent actions, but because of psychological actions. Most of the time, these are psychological actions. You get a synagogue with a firebomb thrown at it, or a school library for Jewish students, or a mosque, or a place of gathering and of worship where people try to come to find peace. Those actions hurt many people.

We must be able to immediately get together and address the damages those victims are facing so that we make sure those who are trying to cause hate will never get away with any benefits from that.

Then there are the bystanders. There are those who are watching, those who are acting, those who are being totally passive, and those who are taking positive action. Of course, there are those who watch and do nothing when they see hate around. There also are those who we can call righteous. They are risking themselves and their lives to defend others, even though they may not share the same religion or the same background. They try to do their utmost to help them.

I think we should bring this forward. We should be able to bring those stories to people and recognize people of different faiths who come together and help others, such as, for example, Jews within the Holocaust at the time of the Second World War, or others, whether it is in Rwanda or Burundi, or whether people help others in different places around the world in order to be able to defend society against hate. You must also look forward in education for those who are sitting silent or sitting outside of this.

There's a third part of combatting hate, a third point that I think is very important. Let me say quickly, to close my submission, that in order for us to combat hate, we must avoid generalizations about the perpetrators of hate, the victims of hate, or the root causes of such a disease.

● (1015)

For this never again to take effect, and to truly mean it, we must be sincere about fighting all forms of hate, discrimination, and defamation of religions. We should not discriminate when we are fighting discrimination. We should not identify only a specific group and forget about others. We should all unite and form one front against those who perpetrate hatred.

For that we should have, first, a common front against all forms of hate; two, education for adults and youth; three, conferences for teachers, unions, politicians, justices, police, etc., to bring awareness about hate; four, zero tolerance for discrimination everywhere in society, with the means to implement such a policy; five, proper implementation of anti-hate laws; and six, hate crimes units with the police.

More specifically, I refer to Montreal, where there is no specific hate crimes unit. I think my friend from B'nai Brith spoke to this issue very well. This is an issue that has suffered from a lack of statistics and thus a lack of properly addressed hate crimes. Many policemen wouldn't even recognize the difference between a hate crime and a non-hate crime in their work. We suffer quite a bit from not having proper statistics and proper implementation of hate laws. We need proper education for those who handle such issues.

When it comes to the media, as I repeat again and again, not all the media do bad things. However, in the Bouchard-Taylor conclusion, it was very clear that they related quite a bit of the crisis of reasonable accommodation in Quebec to the fact that the media had mostly caused it—had fabricated it, in fact.

This is a very serious issue. We don't want to shut anybody up. Again, my plea here on the issue of freedom of expression is that we don't necessarily always want to fight this through the law, but we must do our utmost to make sure that there really is freedom of expression for all, not only for a specific group of people; not only for journalists.

We must make sure that these issues are addressed consistently within society. We must be consistent about financing the study of hate incidents and criminal activities; keeping a close watch on developments; empowering NGOs to fight hate through financing of programs and government participation; recognizing and encouraging good efforts toward social harmony and peaceful coexistence; researching the effectiveness of current laws and strengthening them if needed, not necessarily getting rid of them; and avoiding the temptation to dilute freedom of religion rights in the charter of rights, whether it be the Quebec rights charter or the Canadian rights charter, through the introduction of the hierarchy of rights, which now is actually being discussed within Quebec.

I will close by showing you this study that was done by Jack Jedwab for the Muslim Council of Montreal. I won't take too much time here. The study indicates that 71.4% of the people who often have contact with Muslims have generally positive attitudes toward

them. Of those who never have contact with Muslims, only 29.6% have a generally positive attitude toward them. I can supply you with the exact figures.

It is quite interesting; he did this for Muslims and Jews, and he came to the conclusion that those who dislike Jews also tend to dislike Arabs. Again, sometimes those common hatreds go around among the same people. Three-quarters of those people with favourable attitudes toward Jews also have favourable attitudes toward Arabs; 90% of those who say they have favourable attitudes toward Jews say they have favourable attitudes toward Arabs. Two-thirds of those people with unfavourable attitudes toward Jews have unfavourable attitudes toward Arabs.

I think fighting hate together will help all of us.

Thank you.

● (1020)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now begin the questions from members.

According to our list, Madam Folco will be first.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Thank you, Chair.

I didn't expect to be the very first one to ask a question. That said, I do have a couple of questions.

[*Translation*]

I would first of all like to ask Mr. Moghrabi a question.

Mr. Moghrabi, thank you for your presentation. I have one or two questions to ask you. I would like to hear you say a little more about one thing that you mentioned: the religious justification behind the requests for accommodation.

As you said in your comments, please remember that, apart from one or two people present here, few are aware of what is happening in Quebec with reasonable accommodation. I would really like you to provide us with the context. That would be my first question.

**Mr. Moise Moghrabi:** I do not know if everyone is aware of this, but the need for reasonable accommodation is the result of a discriminatory practice that appears not to be one.

● (1025)

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Slow down, please.

**Mr. Moise Moghrabi:** The Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms guarantees certain rights. Sometimes, policies that are implemented in a non-discriminatory way result in discrimination for certain groups. For example, if you insist that a certain activity take place on a Saturday, the choice of a Saturday does not seem to be discriminatory. But if practising Jews are among those obliged to participate, they cannot. As a result, the choice of Saturday will appear discriminatory to them. Reasonable accommodation is the obligation imposed by the Supreme Court of Canada that requires an organization to find an alternative solution to the holding of the event on Saturday or to allow this person to participate separately on another day. That is reasonable accommodation.

Let us talk about the problem of dynamics we have in Quebec. Requests for accommodation do not pose us any problem. If you call your employer and tell him that your child has a hockey tournament on Monday, that you want to go with him and that you need the day off, the employer will grant you the leave because, in general, people are sick on Mondays and do not come in to work, so the business is not affected.

But if you are a Protestant and you want to take Easter Monday off, the problem is that some employers will react by saying that this is a religious-based request, that it is not serious, and they will turn it down. The problem, in the dynamics of Quebec society, is that requests for accommodation based on religious grounds are not on an equal footing with other requests for accommodation.

That is the problem we have in Quebec. It comes from the fact that Quebecers have managed to get out from under the thumb of religion that oppressed them until the 1960s or 1970s. So there is an aversion to religion in general. Unfortunately, religious groups who make requests for accommodation fall afoul of this.

You must understand that most requests for accommodation do not come from Jewish or Muslim minorities; they come from Protestants and from people with disabilities. Jews and Protestants are far down the list. The newspapers are guilty of sensationalism. Even worse, this media sensationalism does not even focus on cases of reasonable accommodation, but on cases of agreements between neighbours and neighbourhoods.

I can give you a typical example that I gave earlier to a colleague here. A group of Muslims decided to go to a sugar bush, but the sugar bush traditionally serves pork. So this group of 90 people or so called the sugar bush to ask if the owner could provide a special menu without pork. The owner of the sugar bush, being a businessman, said that there was no problem. Unfortunately, the next day, we read in the paper that a group of Muslims had pressured the owner of the sugar bush to change the traditional Quebec menu and remove the pork, and here was reasonable accommodation being imposed on the sugar bush owner. You can imagine how revolted the people reading this kind of article are. That is what happens in Quebec when reasonable accommodations comes up.

Does that answer your question?

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Thank you.

Do I have any time left? May I continue?

**The Chair:** No, you are out of time.

Mr. Watson, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for appearing here at the Canadian parliamentary inquiry into anti-Semitism.

Obviously so we can have a reasonable discussion about anti-Semitism, I want to begin with a question I've been posing to all of the guests who have been appearing here before the committee: what is your definition of anti-Semitism?

As a committee, we are being tasked with coming up with a definition of anti-Semitism. It has been suggested by several witnesses before the committee that we adopt the working definition of anti-Semitism done by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. The EUMC is now the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

First of all, are you familiar with the EUMC definition? Is it your definition of anti-Semitism? If not, what is your definition of anti-Semitism?

Ms. Hogben.

**Mrs. Alia Hogben:** Perhaps you'll first give me the definition you have, sir.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Okay. So you're not familiar with the EUMC definition?

**Mrs. Alia Hogben:** No, I'm not.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Do we have something that we can hand to her, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** We have copies in English and in French. We can distribute that.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** That would be helpful, Mr. Chair, since the first witness is not familiar with the EUMC position.

If you're not prepared to render an opinion on that definition at the moment, if you need more time to think about it, you can certainly reply to the committee in writing with your thoughts.

Mr. Chair, since I ask this question at every hearing, it may be fruitful to have those distributed at the beginning of the next set of hearings or subsequent sets of hearings.

**The Chair:** Do you want us to go back to you in a few minutes?

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Yes. That would be fine, because my questioning builds on this.

**The Chair:** Why don't we ask Mr. Dryden to go forward now? We'll get back to your question in a few minutes.

Mr. Dryden.

**Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.):** Thank you.

A couple of your testimonies really had to do with the basic question of what the rationale was for this committee to focus on anti-Semitism and not on all kinds of hate and discrimination. Also, even if there are different histories and different experiences, events, and dimensions that come out of those histories, and even if there are historically different sensitivities that emerge, the essence of the question is the same and therefore, in your view, the essence of the answer is the same.

Can you just talk further on that? As a committee where the focus, the title, and the theme of the work of the committee has to do with anti-Semitism, what is your advice in terms of the committee going forward in its work? What is your advice for the writing and the recommendations that would happen in the end? And how would one keep, at least in the back of one's mind, the larger question, and not just the specific question, as we come to our recommendations?

•(1030)

**Mrs. Alia Hogben:** Well, I don't know if any of you can answer the question I asked—namely, why focus on one group?

Being a minority—I've been in Canada for over 50 years, so I don't see myself very often as a minority, but I am—it always puzzles me why one group is picked upon, or selected, or favoured, or disfavoured. For me, speaking as a Canadian, we should all be treated equally. With the exception of very rare cases, such as employment or something very specific—I've worked with handicapped people, where one has to make certain considerations—generally we should go for things that are universal, that would apply to all of us.

Otherwise, if I come to you next year and ask you all to form a committee to look into discriminations against Muslims, or discrimination against Hindus, what will your answer be? Won't you be discriminatory if you say, no, sorry, we haven't got the time, the effort, the money, or the whatever to do that?

I think it's more that kind of concern. It has nothing to do with this one looking at anti-Semitism. In anything you do as parliamentarians, you need to take that into consideration: we're all here together. And this is not just to you; it's also....

I said initially that I wasn't speaking here as a Canadian Muslim. I didn't want to do that. This wasn't the purpose. But perhaps I can change my mind a little bit here. There are a lot of issues within Muslim communities—already I use the plural—and it has always been our organization's feeling that we can't ask for a lot of exceptions, because those exceptions then become very difficult for our communities and also for those who think they're giving it. But if they were general....

I'll give you an example. When I was a young social worker, I worked for handicapped people. In Kingston at the time, and certainly in Toronto, the curbs weren't graded. When we asked for graded curbs, we always got the answer that it was too expensive, that very few disabled people would use it, and so on. We told them, "Look, it could become a universal thing. It would work for a senior. It would work for a mother with a pram. It would work for anybody who was injured." It became universal, and it could be dealt with in that way.

That's a roundabout way of answering your question. Your committee is already set up, so you obviously are not going to listen to me; you'll continue to deal with anti-Semitism. I hope, however, when you're dealing with it, that you will constantly have it in your minds that there's more than one kind of "anti".

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Are you saying, then, that you believe treating something universally in fact enhances the strength of the actions taken as opposed to the reverse; that even for those groups that otherwise would be specifically focused on, the real power comes in focusing on the universal?

**Mrs. Alia Hogben:** Yes, I do. I think if you're going to be a country....

Canada, to me, is a country of immigrants. Some people have been here for 300 years and some of us have just come. With the exception of aboriginals, everyone is an immigrant, as far as I'm

concerned. Therefore, if we want to become a cohesive group, why do we want to keep fragmenting ourselves?

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Thank you.

Yes, sir.

**Imam Salam Elmenyaw:** We're also talking about hate and discrimination here, so if we try to address this issue with one group specifically, that in itself would sound like discrimination. I think we're sending a message of a lack of consistency in addressing this issue ahead of everyone else.

I also want to mention the 2005 law from the United Nations—this was raised by the Canadian Council of Muslim Women in their submission—that was not voted for by Canada. This was combatting defamation of religions in general, and it was not voted for by Canada.

When I asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Mr. Pettigrew, about it, he actually didn't have an answer. He didn't even know about it, that it wasn't voted for. His office explained that it didn't specifically call for anti-Semitism in the law, though the law was general about combatting defamation of religion.

We thought this should address all the different ones; that Canada should really have been there; that Canada should really have voted for combatting defamation against religion in general. To skip on voting for this law and then make specific laws for anti-Semitism, for example, gives people, especially conspiracy theorists, the idea that more and more the indications are that anti-Semitism will take more room in the laws of the country than those for all the other people combined who are also suffering from this kind of hate and discrimination.

With regard to recognition that Jews suffered in the Holocaust, there is no objection whatsoever, or that this should be emphasized. There should even be specific areas relating to some of these issues within the law. There is nothing wrong with that. What is wrong is when we deal only with that and we leave others not addressed. There is still room for us to work on trying to combat hatred in society.

•(1035)

**The Chair:** We'll go to Moïse, and then we have to go back to Mr. Watson.

**Mr. Moïse Moghrabi:** Personally, I don't feel favoured at all. I don't feel favoured to be the target of extreme hate. I don't feel favoured for being persecuted. I don't feel favoured for, worldwide, being the target of anti-Semitic shows and speeches about my demise, my killing, my slaughtering, or my murdering, and about eliminating my religion from the face of the planet. So if my colleague sitting with me thinks this is a favour that we are giving the Jewish people by talking about anti-Semitism in particular, I'm sorry to say that I don't feel so favoured.

I feel that this is an extreme problem and that it's extreme to a point where we have to address it specifically. Worldwide, we can see, maybe not in Canada but in other places in the world.... I opened my computer yesterday and I saw a splash of a show and a person that came online on Egyptian TV, which is national TV, to say that for every Jew on the face of the earth, all offspring of apes and pigs, the day of vengeance is nearing. I don't see this addressing any other religion. I don't see any other religion right now actually fighting that kind of hate across the globe, that kind of willingness to wipe them off the earth. I think that is why we need these kinds of parliamentary commissions and coalitions.

The problem is extreme and peculiar because the hate that is spewed when coming out as anti-Semitism is very distinct and destructive. And it only starts with the Jews. It ends with all other people. So I think it's a particular case.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Watson, we're going back to you now.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Again, thank you to our witnesses for appearing today.

You've now had distributed to you the EUMC's working definition on anti-Semitism. To go back to my line of questioning, maybe I'll start with Mr. Moghrabi.

First of all, is this your definition of anti-Semitism? Should the panel be adopting this definition of anti-Semitism? If not, what is your definition of anti-Semitism?

We'll start with that question, and I'll ask some follow-up questions.

**Mr. Moïse Moghrabi:** For the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada, it is actually the definition that we use and that we put in our audit every year to define anti-Semitism, so I think it should be adopted. It is being universally adopted all over the world.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Okay.

Mr. Elmenyawi.

**Imam Salam Elmenyawi:** Yes, I have looked in a simple way at some of the anti-Semitism.... I felt, of course, that this wasn't detailed, to indicate different tools for defining anti-Semitism and different issues like the denial of the Holocaust, for example. I have no problem with this, but there are certain issues here that certainly I would need more time to look into and maybe give you my response in writing later on.

• (1040)

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** That would be fine, Mr. Elmenyawi.

Ms. Hogben.

**Mrs. Alia Hogben:** I would like to do the same. It's very small print and rather badly copied. I'm having a struggle reading it, but there are a couple of points, so I wouldn't mind responding.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** We would appreciate your input to the committee afterwards. Of course, having a definition of anti-Semitism is important, obviously, if we are, first, going to be able to define the scope of anti-Semitism in Canada and define what it is

we're actually combatting. So if that's not your particular definition of anti-Semitism, we would like, in writing, what your definition of anti-Semitism would be.

Secondly for our panellists, what are you doing to actually combat anti-Semitism in Canada right now? How are you doing that? What are we teaching about the Holocaust of the Jews and what lessons can be learned from that? What types of things are you doing currently to combat anti-Semitism in Canada?

**Mr. Moïse Moghrabi:** B'nai Brith has participated in the Holocaust conference, which I think was in June, and we are going around and continuing that work with a grant from the government.

The League for Human Rights is promoting human rights and combatting anti-Semitism by going around and meeting all government officials at all levels of government, starting with municipal government, as well as NGOs, in trying to awaken a sense of urgency to the problem. The league is also trying to share with them that this is just the tip of the iceberg and that it's not only a Jewish problem. It's like Mr. Comper said this morning: it's a problem for non-Jews to deal with also. We are actively working on that.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Thank you, Mr. Moghrabi.

Mr. Elmenyawi.

**Imam Salam Elmenyawi:** With the Muslim Council, there are different hats I wear and there are different events that I take care of.

With both chaplaincies, the McGill chaplaincy and the Concordia chaplaincy, the members of the chaplaincy are from all kinds of faith backgrounds. We do all kinds of events during the year to exchange ideas, to bring people together from different faiths, and to show them the similarities between people of Jewish background or Muslim background. In fact, most of our activities have been between Muslims and Jews on both campuses, at McGill and at Concordia University.

In most of those settings, we leave people to talk together and elaborate on most of these issues. Of course, those who attend specifically, those who come to such events, are also very much aware of the issues of the Holocaust, and they are very much up front with some of these issues, but they are also leaders who are able to take some of these ideas and convey them back to the Muslim community or to the Jewish community about both parties.

With the Muslim Council of Montreal, we have had conferences and seminars. We also have a program right now between the mosques and the synagogues. Together with Rabbi Whitman...we visit and we share sincerely many of our activities within both places at numerous times during the year. We talk and reflect about our rituals, our ideas, and the suffering we've faced within history.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Mr. Elmenyawi, fostering discussion is obviously an important part. What are you doing to actively combat anti-Semitism, though? Taking it a step beyond just sort of generally getting to know each other, what active steps are you or your groups taking to combat anti-Semitism? Are you speaking out against it on campuses and in the community? What active steps are you taking to combat anti-Semitism in Canada?

**Imam Salam Elmenyawi:** Well, not only are we speaking out against it, but we are acting out against it. We are working together with people. We're not just sitting there and making speeches, though we did. I think our website—

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Do you have some examples?

● (1045)

**Imam Salam Elmenyawi:** —is full of condemnations of terrorist activities and of all the events that happened, including, for example, the burning of the school library in Montreal. It was the Muslim Council of Montreal that called for a press conference immediately afterwards, without knowing who the perpetrator was. At that time, we invited B'nai Brith, the Canadian Jewish Congress, and many of the other NGOs. I think Fo Niemi, who is here, was also with us at the same time at this conference. We immediately said that we're all one people, that attacking any one of us is an attack on all of us, and that such attacks must stop.

Not only did we make that very clear, but I also had the opportunity to meet with the person who actually did this act. In jail, as the chaplain for those prisons, I had a discussion with him. I can't actually convey the details of the discussion, but the consequence of my discussion was that he gave an open apology to the Jewish community and the Muslim community. I have to tell you that in closing the discussion with me, he was crying, that very person.

So I've done quite a bit. Not only that, but within the mosques, within the bounds of our meetings, we make it very clear to people in exchanges with them about peaceful coexistence and the ways of respect—not just tolerance, but rather to give respect to one another.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We have a few more members who want to ask questions. We have very limited time, so we have to be stricter with the timing.

I also want to apologize to the witness for the poor quality of the photocopying. We will e-mail that to you, and quite rightly so, because it's not fair to give you something that's very hard to read.

The next member to ask questions is Carolyn Bennett.

Dr. Bennett.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Thanks very much.

My question is for the imam.

You said that hate is a disease, but not the same virus, and therefore it's not the same treatment. Maybe because I'm a physician, I found that particularly interesting. I think that many of us have thought of hatred as a virus.

Also, you said that we should avoid generalizations about the perpetrators, the victims, and the root causes. I just wondered if you would expand on that a little or maybe give the committee some examples.

**Imam Salam Elmenyawi:** For example, we have those ardent haters who just hate. It doesn't matter what you explain to them. It doesn't matter if you show them history. If you show them the past or if you show them the present, there is nothing they will take out of that. I think these are the ones who may be candidates for criminalization or laws that would actually deal with them in a harsh way.

Then there are those who do it only because they don't know the other side. They just don't understand, or they have been misled, or they've been reading the wrong articles and wrong information on the Internet or in the newspaper. It is only having the means of accessing their ideas and being able to deal with them that will bring them right into understanding.

There is also a religious context to some of what I would say were struggles between people of different faiths in past history. Sometimes when people talk about this, it could be misunderstood, or things could be taken out of context. It also isn't proper to generalize about them and to write them off completely in our society the minute they make a mistake. We have to deal with some of those actions with compassion and with understanding. We have to come closer and indicate that to them and explain. Maybe we have to deal with others in much harsher ways and with much more of a mechanism that can let us make an example of them in order to be able to stop it.

We have to be able to figure out the different ways of addressing hate. In fact, we must have all of these ways: bringing education, having laws, and having exposure to each other so that people will do it together. I read about the way of combatting hate in California for people who were imprisoned because of hate crimes. They put them together, blacks with whites and so on, and they put them together in a business so that the income of the business went to them and they got to know one another. In the beginning, they really resisted, but six months later, according to the program on CNN, they actually had changed their ideas completely.

Sometimes if we are too harsh, that fighting in itself creates a reaction of more hate.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** In regard to the almost ignorance, the education piece, I've always been impressed whenever I am in Israel, and in fact I usually try to make sure I get to the Museum on the Seam. I don't know if you have seen the Museum on the Seam, but it's about almost immunizing children against hatred by exposing them to.... As you go through the museum, you're exposed to the southern states, then to Northern Ireland, then to Bosnia, and eventually to the Middle East. It really explains the effects of hatred. Small children in kindergarten are exposed to this.

Your California example was interesting in terms of remedies for hate actions. Is there anything you think this committee should put in the recommendations around the root causes and the kind of inoculation against hatred or the kinds of remedies you would want to see on all aspects of hatred?

● (1050)

**Imam Salam Elmenyawi:** Yes. I mentioned a number of points. I can send those later on in writing to your clerk.

There are a number of educational things that we can do. We also have some of the exchanges. You have the work of the Canadian Jewish Congress, for example, in Montreal, which has been able to visit Muslim schools. The youngsters from Muslim schools will actually go to spend some time in Jewish schools, and some Jewish students will also spend some time in Muslim schools. You work together at a young age and are exposed early on to one another. You can see how they work and deal with one another.

At times, there were even programs for them to live with a Jewish family, to see and feel some of those differences, though this might sound a little bit difficult within the Muslim tradition because of religious reasons. That's not because it is Jewish or Christian or other Muslims either; it's the idea of having to be within the vicinity of their own families.

But I think it is this kind of exchange of ideas that brings people together and brings them to doing programs together. So having the programs themselves will be educational and it will also give them a chance to experience one another. I think this is very important. And there are many imams. It isn't only myself. I do represent close to 40 different institutions, though I am here today for myself and from my personal experience, but to have close to 40 imams who are willing to work together with other rabbis.... Within my life, I've personally made new friendships with more rabbis than the average Jew. I think these are the kinds of ideas we have to bring in to have this kind of change happening.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I have one last question. My friend Irwin Cotler talks about the mobilization of shame. Of the imams who are prepared to work in a multi-faith way to combat hatred, what do you do with your colleagues who go by the title of imam but really have no interest in working towards this kind of respect and understanding, or who actually do the opposite?

I can remember being in Northern Ireland and thinking about what these church people were saying on Sunday mornings such that this could continue to go on, because it was nuts. As physicians, if we have bad physicians, we actually try to do something about it as a profession.

What are the remedies for people of faith who are promoting hatred?

**Imam Salam Elmenyawi:** Let me admit that some imams have made bad comments in relation to hate as well, but some also have been misunderstood and have been taken out of context. Some of their own words have been taken out of a talk, were not complete, and actually would have balanced what they said.

But the community is very young. For example, we started in Montreal in maybe the 1990s. In 1991, we were only some 30,000, and the numbers started to grow. Even just 10 years earlier, the number of Muslims in Montreal was at about 5,000, and today there are close to 250,000 Muslims in Quebec. This is a huge increase in the number of Muslims.

So the community has grown much faster than the available resources. The average age of the community is 28, which compares to the Jewish community at 44 years old, so look, there are mostly kids. Again, that indicates a lack of resources and a community that is growing faster than we ourselves can organize everything there is to do. But there is really a lot of work being done within the community to try to address some of these issues, and not many people who talk give negative views. It's isolated.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We have two more questions, from Professor Cotler and from Mr. Sweet, and then we have to end.

Mr. Cotler.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I just want to express my appreciation to the witnesses for coming here this morning and sharing their perspectives.

I think I'll address myself not necessarily to one of the witnesses, but to one of the witnesses' questions, because I think it is a very relevant question and it deserves an answer. That was the one Alia Hogben put to us: why was this committee set up and are we sort of setting up a hierarchy of discrimination? Let me just, if I may, answer in two ways on hierarchy of discrimination and how we're looking into anti-Semitism, if you will, and not looking into discrimination elsewhere.

I would say parenthetically that I sat on a foreign affairs committee that looked into the whole question of our relationship with Muslim countries and matters of foreign policy. This didn't mean that we didn't care about other countries in matters of foreign policy. It's that we felt that maybe there was a particular form of discriminatory application there, and therefore we addressed it.

So this is not unusual, but let me specifically answer your question and say, one, what this committee is not about and what it is not intended to be about. Since it is sometimes referenced, I think it should be made clear. This is not a committee about chilling speech with respect to Israel, or chilling criticism with respect to Israel, or chilling the rigorous criticism with respect to Israel.

Israel, like any other state, is responsible for any violations of human rights and humanitarian law. The Jewish people are not entitled to any privilege or preference before the law on this notion of equality before the law of which you spoke. They are not entitled to any privilege or preference before the law. The issue is equality before the law, so I'm basing myself on that principle. As my colleague Tom Friedman put it, to say that criticism of Israel is anti-Semitism is "vile". It's wrong. One has to say that. I've said it before. I'm repeating it again because you asked the question.

At the same time, the second part of the question is, then why was this committee set up? Let me just very briefly, for reasons of time, try to summarize it.

Number one is because anti-Semitism, or hatred of Jews, has been regarded as the oldest and most enduring of hatreds. In other words, it's emerged as a paradigmatic case study of what one of the witnesses before us has said is "a lethal obsession, from antiquity to the present time", and as Professor Robert Wistrich, who testified before this committee, said in his book that's just been published as we meet, it's had "murderous consequences".

So that's the first thing. But you can say, okay, it's historical, it's not now. Let me take you to contemporary time. What the London conference, the founding conference of the Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism, heard witness testimony about—and I'll sum it up, if I may, in one sentence, again for reasons of time—was that there is a new, escalating, sophisticated, virulent, global, and even lethal anti-Semitism.

One can agree or disagree. I'm just saying what the witness testimony is, which is available, and I'm willing to share with you a paper that I wrote on it.

I'll sum it up by giving you three out of twelve indicators of the new anti-Semitism, just to answer this question and to maybe put this in perspective; there are people here who are listening and people who are reading the transcript.

I mentioned the fact that it's the oldest and most enduring of hatreds and therefore the paradigmatic thing. I mentioned the witness testimony at the London conference. Let me now just give you the three indicators in terms of anti-Semitism today and why we are looking into it.

Number one: because of the phenomenon of state-sanctioned genocidal anti-Semitism. There are three manifestations of that.

First is Ahmadinejad's Iran, and I use that because I want to distinguish that from the people and publics of Iran who are otherwise the targets of massive domestic oppression. I'm not talking about Iran; I'm talking about Ahmadinejad.

Second is the state-sanctioned genocidal anti-Semitism of terrorist movements that have, as their own charters publicly proclaim, not because I say so...they call publicly for the destruction of Israel and the killing of Jews, wherever they may be. That must be condemned. That is another matter before us.

• (1055)

The third is where religious fatwas are issued against an entire people, by certain radical clerics who so issue it, so that Israel emerges not just as a Jew among the nations but the Salman Rushdie among the nations. Where, as I say, you have a fatwa against the people, that's the first thing, genocidal anti-Semitism.

The second is political anti-Semitism, where, as Martin Luther King put it, the Jewish people are the only ones who have been singled out for denial of the right to self-determination—in other words, the denial of Israel's right to exist, the denial of Jewish people's right to self-determination, and the denial even that they are a people. If I were to say that there should not be any Islamic states, or that Muslims are not a people, I think you would rightly say that this would be anti-Muslim, and would be wrong.

The third and last point goes to the heart of your overall generic presentation on principles, which I appreciate, and that's the issue of equality. It's not the speech issue, it's the equality issue. If one member state in the international community is singled out for differential and discriminatory treatment, we as Canadians are obliged by law, both under our charter and with respect to international treaty obligations, to protect against discrimination by law.

I'm not saying we need any new laws. I'm not saying this parliamentary committee should come up with any new legislation—not at all. I think the legal framework that exists is sufficient. I'm talking about the equality principle.

I'll use only one example of many that I could give here, and that is where, before the United Nations Human Rights Council, one member state, which we'll call X.... It happens to be Israel, but if Israel changes the nature of the narrative, call it X.

At any rate, if X is singled out for discriminatory treatment in the resolutions of condemnation by the UN Human Rights Council—I

take them seriously, and as a law professor taught its jurisprudence—such that 80% of the resolutions, 26 out of 32, condemn one member state, and the major human rights violators, such as Sudan and Iran, have no resolutions against them, that's a denial of equality before the law. And that's what the London Declaration said.

I'll conclude with words from Tom Friedman, a *New York Times* columnist. He wrote that saying that criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic is vile and wrong, and we should condemn it. He also said that singling out Israel for discriminatory treatment *is* anti-Semitic, and not to say that is dishonest.

I'm putting both of those aspects of his statement together to try to answer the very legitimate query you put to us.

• (1100)

**The Chair:** Ms. Hogben, I know you want to make a response, but unfortunately it will have to be very brief. We have to wrap up in about five minutes, and Mr. Sweet still has a final question to ask.

Please go ahead.

**Mrs. Alia Hogben:** Well, you are very articulate, very passionate, and you describe what you see in a very valid way. I don't think anybody could disagree with what you've just said. However, I would break it down into different pieces.

I'll write to you on this; I'll break it down.

I have no problem with the things you've said about the discriminatory actions against Israel. I think it's the jumbling up that silences me. It does. I am definitely not anti-Jewish. My brother is Jewish. My son is black. So I'm not willing to accept that any criticism I might make....

To tell you the truth, in terms of all the examples you've given, one of the things I wanted *not* to do here was to make this into a Muslim-Jewish fight. The majority of Muslim states are abysmal, are cruel to their own people, are totalitarian, have no human rights history....

Sorry.

**Imam Salam Elmenyawi:** No, no; there's no sorry about it.

**Mrs. Alia Hogben:** I have no time on those things. I'm not here defending other countries and the way they behave. I agree with you, that's an issue for international law. You know that best. You teach it. It's the jumbling that I'm talking about.

If you made the statement that it is vile—I usually read Tom Friedman, but I didn't read that one—to say that criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic, then I think that would be very clear.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** I've made it. I'll give you my articles on it.

• (1105)

**Mrs. Alia Hogben:** And I think...and then we can deal with them. This should not in any way allow Canada to defend Israel vociferously, passionately, when it does something. But to mix it up and call it anti-Semitism—it is a very strong, powerful word.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** You're right, and that is why I tried to distinguish—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, we have to go on.

Mr. Sweet, you have the final question.

I apologize for the delay.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Mr. Chairman, Mr. Van Kesteren is going to take the final question. However, it is important for me to say, regarding Mr. Cotler's statement, that although we are all from different sides, we are all in complete agreement with what he articulated as the purpose of this committee. I can also reassure Madam Hogben that one of our purposes is to clarify this in the recommendations as well, so that it is not jumbled.

Now, because my colleague hasn't had a chance to ask a question, I'll let Mr. Van Kesteren take my time.

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for joining us. This has been a bright spot in this study. I can't add too much to what Mr. Cotler said. He has done an excellent job in bringing it back home. It would be foolhardy for me to try to build on what he did. He summarized that well.

I want to bring it home one step further. Where I come from, in southwestern Ontario, I could probably count on one hand how many Jewish families there are in all of my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex. We do have a few more Muslim people who live in my area, but this issue of anti-Semitism probably doesn't raise its head. However, we have and have had an issue with the black community. We have a lot of blacks who came through the underground railroad and settled in our area. Oftentimes we like to put ourselves on a plateau and say we are those fine, upstanding white people who took the blacks in when the south was doing horrible things to them. But there is an underlying racism. I have always tried to tell my children that if you want to know if there is racism living in your heart, if you really care for your fellow man, it is when he's up against three thugs and you step in the middle to try to stop that fight. That is bringing it home. It's one thing to say you shouldn't fight, and we don't want to see this sort of thing happen; it is quite another to get yourself banged up.

That is why I really take courage, Imam, in some of the things that you've said. However, I am going to disagree with you on one issue, if I may. Hate is not a disease. I think hate comes from right here. Mr. Cotler, Mr. Watson, and some of the others have expressed how important it is for us to create laws. We are talking about some of those things, but this, right here, is the heart. I am encouraged to hear what you are saying, because you have an impact there that we don't have in the government. We can make laws. We can throw people in

jail and do whatever to discourage hatred, but you have much more ability...so I am encouraged to hear what you are saying.

I guess what I'm asking, to bring it home, to wrap it up, is whether you would participate, given your capacity, to make that public. That would be such a profound statement, to take it one step further, if you would publicly say that you will endeavour to do everything you can and encourage everything you can. Also, all of us, in the Christian churches, in the Muslim or the Hindu faith, can say within our communities that this is wrong; we have to stop this. I think that would just add that one element that would make this whole thing a possibility. I'm encouraged by what you say, and I hope you will come out and say that publicly too.

**The Chair:** We are terribly over time. I am tasked to be very brief, and I'm actually delayed for my committee meeting, which started 10 minutes ago.

**Imam Salam Elmenyawi:** Well, as you know, the diseases of the heart are the worst diseases, believe me; these are still diseases of the heart.

But to speak loudly, I feel that I'm getting tired sometimes of being told, for example, that Muslims did not condemn terrorism or Muslims did not talk against hate or Muslims did not do this or that. We speak, but it seems like people don't recognize us. They don't see us. We are not there. When we speak, we get ignored. We get bypassed. We don't get recognized. I think this is a much more severe issue, and I think a bit more work should be done to find out what we did and did not say.

I personally visited the Cummings Jewish Centre for Seniors. I visited the Golda Meir chapter and spoke with the people personally, one on one. I was invited by the people in the West Island. I did so much within the Jewish community to let them know what we are doing on our side, and I did so much within the Muslim community, and still from time to time I face a journalist who comes to me and asks why I didn't condemn terrorism and why I didn't do much about these issues.

Maybe we don't have exactly the means to go out and advertise what we do, which would probably bring in other people to join with us, so maybe if the government would allow us some programs or some money, we could do some work to bring about more awareness and to be able to really speak loudly within the community—

● (1110)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, but I do have to end the meeting.

I want to remind the members that we have a meeting at 7:30 in the morning on Thursday, in room 208, West Block.

With that, the meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much.





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