

**ANTISEMITISM IN CANADA:
QUEBEC AS A SPECIAL CASE**

Presented by

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Since 1881, B'nai Brith has had an excellent reputation in Quebec as a leader in human rights matters because of its initiatives and relentless work against all forms of racism in our society.

The Quebec Region's League of Human Rights welcomes this opportunity to inform the Inquiry of its concerns regarding the recent instances of antisemitism in Quebec in 2008, which urgently need to be addressed.

B'nai Brith Canada – Quebec Region provides this information specifically about the province to lay the foundation for the more detailed oral statement it wishes to give before the Inquiry.

Statistics for the province of Quebec

There were 245 reported acts of antisemitism in Quebec in 2008, which represents 21.6% of all such reported incidents across Canada in 2008. This figure is down from the 291 incidents reported in 2007, a 15.8% decrease.

The League is most concerned about three violent incidents that occurred in the regions, a sector that did not report any antisemitic violence in 2007. One of these cases is that of a young man on vacation in a rural area in Quebec who was assaulted in a face-to-face encounter on a public road.

As well, marked increases were observed in Quebec in July and August 2008, when 63 of the year's 245 cases reported in the province occurred. These two months alone account for 25.7% of the entire year's cases. In the regions, 33 of the 44 cases reported in 2008 (75%) occurred in these two summer months. This can be explained in part by the prejudices that continue to persist against members of the ultra-orthodox Jewish community, many of whom spend the summer months in the country. In fact, this is consistent with the trend identified in the *2007 Audit*.

Examples of incidents

Montreal – A Montreal Facebook group called “Nazi” was created to “promouvoir le racisme et l’antisémitisme” [promote racism and antisemitism].

Saint-Sauveur – A swastika labelled “Juif” [Jew] was scribbled on the bulletin board in a Jewish teacher’s classroom.

Montreal – Stop signs were defaced with swastikas in a neighbourhood with a high Jewish population.

Quebec City – A client asking for a refund was told not to “faire le Juif” [be a Jew].

Montreal – A blogger wrote antisemitic comments about Hasidic Jews in Quebec.

Sainte-Agathe – A visibly Jewish man just passing through the region was assaulted as he walked to the synagogue: onlookers did nothing.

Montreal – An antisemitic message was sent to hundreds of email addresses, warning the recipients against Jewish people.

Montreal – A waitress in a café refused to serve a Jewish customer after seeing a Magen David (Star of David) on her necklace.

Sainte-Agathe – Messages were sent to a local synagogue threatening to burn it down and saying “Mort aux Juifs” [Death to Jews].

Montreal – Bricks were thrown through the windows of a synagogue.

Montreal – The packaging of a Russian product for sale in local shops featured an antisemitic illustration.

Trends in Quebec over the last ten years

Trends in 2009

These figures and examples, combined with the number of incidents reported to date for 2009, confirm that antisemitism is a real, persistent and stubborn threat to the safety and well-being of Quebec Jews at home, at school, in the workplace and on the street.

In 2009, and especially during the summer months, our Montreal office has been flooded with calls reporting incidents of antisemitic assault and graffiti, including swastikas and other Nazi insignia. January also saw a marked increase in the number of antisemitic incidents, which is when the Gaza conflict intensified, reaching one of the highest tallies of the year. Quebec is the province with the second highest number of antisemitic incidents in Canada.

Recommendations

- B'nai Brith calls on the federal government to increase the vigilance and awareness of government representatives, members of law enforcement, the courts, educational institutions and society as a whole to enhance the protection of victims of racism and sectarianism in Quebec and all of Canada.
- The provincial and federal governments should enact strict legislation to forbid membership in racist organizations and the display of racist symbols.
- Careful examination of legislative amendments is needed to combat the distribution of hate literature, including Holocaust denial.
- All police forces with a provincial or federal presence should have specialized hate crimes units tasked with determining if an incident is a hate crime and investigating accordingly in order to enforce protective legislation and zero tolerance of hate crimes.
- B'nai Brith recommends that anti-discrimination and anti-violence be a mandatory part of school curricula.

- Funding should be increased for organizations such as the B'nai Brith League for Human Rights that can help schools, public sector agencies and community groups develop programs, recognize early warning signs and take action against hate in schools and local communities throughout Canada and Quebec.
- Most importantly, public funding should be provided for projects fighting racism, such as *Taking Action Against Hate*, our training program that was developed by the League for Human Rights and was successfully presented to thousands of teachers, students, law enforcement professionals, public and private sector workers and vulnerable minority groups across the country.

Conclusion

B'nai Brith applauds the federal government for taking decisive action to combat not only antisemitism but all forms of racism by creating the *Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism*.

B'nai Brith has had successful partnerships with schools and community groups regarding a zero-tolerance policy against antisemitism and racism, which has given it the experience necessary to be able to distribute crucial resources and training on this topic.

Offering this type of program in schools and communities would put our country at the forefront of training against racism and would encourage a spirit of activism regarding human rights in various sectors of our multicultural society.

B'nai Brith Canada – Quebec Region would appreciate the opportunity to present to the Inquiry a more detailed witness statement about antisemitic issues particular to Quebec.