

From: noreply@calgary.ca
To: [Public Submissions](#)
Subject: Notice of Motion: COMBATTING ANTISEMITISM IN THE CITY OF CALGARY
Date: Wednesday, November 06, 2019 1:50:18 PM
Attachments: [Larry Haiven letter to Calgary council.pdf](#)
[Public Submission to the City Clerk's Office.pdf](#)

Public Submission from Larry Haiven

Larry Haiven, PhD
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5606 Morris Street
Halifax, NS, B3J 1C2
4 November, 2019

His Worship Mayor Nenshi and City Councillors
c/o City Clerk's Office,
700 Macleod Trail S.E.,
P.O Box 2100, Postal Station 'M' 8007,
Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2M5

Dear Mayor Nenshi and Councillors

I have been made aware of the Notice of Motion Re: Combatting Antisemitism In The City Of Calgary.

I am a Jew, a former Albertan, and the son of a survivor of the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp. I am a strong opponent of antisemitism and have fought it and other forms of bigotry and racism all my life. I am also the author of a monograph on antisemitism (<https://www.ijvcanada.org/antisemitism-in-context-its-use-and-abuse-an-ijv-report/>)

I applaud your initiative to promote knowledge about the Holocaust and to fight racism and bigotry.

Nonetheless, I urge you NOT to adopt this motion. Here are a number of reasons:

- The so-called International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance – Working Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA-WDA) is a deeply-flawed document. Even its original author, Kenneth Stern, now disavows the use of this definition to effectively stifle debate and discussion of the actions and policies of the State of Israel.

Stern has said, "My fear is, if we...enshrine this definition into law, outside groups will try and suppress – rather than answer – political speech they don't like. The academy, Jewish students, and faculty teaching about Jewish issues, will all suffer."

I am not advocating complete free speech on all issues. True racism and antisemitism needs to be condemned and curbed. But criticism of the ideology and actions of any state, be it China, Israel, or Canada, belongs in the public domain.

- The British Columbia Civil Liberties Association (one of the premier human rights organizations in the country) has condemned the IHRA-WDA, using, in part, the following words:

"We strongly oppose this proposal because of its threat to freedom of expression. Antisemitism is a serious problem. Our association is unequivocally opposed to antisemitism and other forms of racism. We believe, however, that fighting racism and defending civil liberties are complementary objectives; that the best way to defeat racism is to promote arguments against it rather than to have the government silence people."

- The notes to your Notice of Motion claim that Vancouver City Council has adopted the IHRA-WDA. This is not true. The motion did not pass and discussion of an anti-racism policy in that city was referred to a committee.
- The organization Independent Jewish Voices Canada has an alternative, clearer and more accurate definition of antisemitism, which begins:

"Antisemitism is racism, hostility, prejudice, vilification, discrimination or violence, including hate crimes, directed against Jews, as individuals, groups or as a collective – because they are Jews. Its expression includes attributing to Jews, as a group, characteristics or behaviours that are perceived as dangerous, harmful, frightening or threatening to non-Jews."

It then goes on to place antisemitism firmly among other forms of bigotry and racism. If you are considering definitions, this one is superior to that of the IHRA-WDA.

- In any case, the IHRA definition treats antisemitism as a standalone sui generis phenomenon independent of other forms of racism. But antisemitism is just one form of the current upsurge of white supremacy and antipathy toward many racial and ethnic groups. It is not more or less noxious than other forms of bigotry. In order to be successful, the fight against this upsurge of hatred, in my opinion, needs to involve many targeted groups working in solidarity and not in isolation. The privileging of a single targeted group cannot help but diminish, and in fact insult, the other targeted groups.

Many thanks for your patience in paying attention to my concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry Haiven". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Larry Haiven



Public Submission

City Clerk's Office

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* I have read and understand that my name, contact information and comments will be made publicly available in the Council Agenda.

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* Last name Haiven

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* Subject Notice of Motion: COMBATTING ANTISEMITISM IN THE CITY OF CALGARY

* Comments - please refrain from providing personal information in this field (maximum 2500 characters)
Please see the attached pdf file