

## MOTION

### 9. Adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism (Member's Motion B.2)

At the Council meeting on November 15, 2022, Council referred the following motion to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on November 16, 2022, in order to hear from speakers, followed by debate and decision.

MOVED by: Councillor Kirby-Yung

#### WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver is committed to advancing reconciliation, equity, and anti-racism for all people in Vancouver and committed to combatting all forms of hatred, including antisemitism. The City continually strives for improvement and to work toward a fairer, safer, more inclusive city;
2. January 27 is designated by the United Nations General Assembly as International Holocaust Remembrance Day; <sup>i</sup>
3. On May 26, 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Plenary, of which the Government of Canada is a permanent member, adopted the working definition of antisemitism and its list of illustrative examples;
4. On June 25, 2019, the Government of Canada adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of Antisemitism (IHRA Definition of Antisemitism);
5. At the July 23, 2019, regular Vancouver City Council meeting, a motion was introduced calling for the City to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism and list of illustrative examples ("*Combatting Antisemitism in Vancouver*");
6. The motion ("*Combatting Antisemitism in Vancouver*") was referred to the City's Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee to provide recommendations to Council on how the City of Vancouver can increase action to combat all forms of racism and hatred, including Antisemitism, with further direction to staff to work with the Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee and report back with recommendations "as soon as possible, or by early 2020."; <sup>ii</sup>
7. Every person in the City of Vancouver has the right to realize their potential without fear of discrimination, and to live in conditions of dignity, respect; and peace;
8. Antisemitism is on the rise around the world, and antisemitic and anti-Jewish hate has flourished in the digital age;
9. Statistics Canada reports that members of the Jewish community are the most frequently targeted religious minority group when it comes to police-reported hate

crimes in 2021. Anti-Jewish hate crimes include beatings, vandalism of synagogues, racist slurs, harassment, intimidation and the plastering of swastikas at schools;

10. In response to the rise of antisemitism and anti-Jewish hate crimes, on July 21, 2021, the Government of Canada and the Honourable Irwin Cotler, Canada's Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism, convened the National Antisemitism Summit to identify ways in which organizations, communities, individuals, and the federal government can work together to increase public awareness, enhance community security, combat misinformation and online hate and identify new measures necessary to combat antisemitism;
11. In June 2022, the Province of BC started working with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism. In a letter sent to the Pacific region office at the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) in Vancouver, BC Premier John Horgan wrote:  
  
*"Our government understands that systemic racism looks different for different communities and that it can change over time.... We also understand that to effectively combat one of the world's oldest forms of hatred, we must first clearly identify it. In this light, we see the IHRA definition as an important non-legally binding educational tool to help us determine what is and what is not antisemitic, which allows us to work toward a society that is better for all British Columbians."*
12. More recently, on October 14, 2022, the Government of Canada reiterated its strong condemnation of the alarming rise of antisemitism at home and abroad and committed to countering online antisemitism by introducing new legislation, along with strengthening the Canada Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code;
13. The City of Vancouver website states: "As we continue to develop our anti-racism and equity strategies to ensure that Vancouver is a more inclusive and fair place, it is more important than ever that the lessons learned and the horrors of the Holocaust remain present in the public consciousness so they are never repeated."; <sup>iii</sup>
14. To date, and in the face of the alarming global increase in antisemitism and anti-Jewish hate and the significant and meaningful actions taken by the federal and provincial governments, the City's actions are not as emphatic or supportive as the situation demands. In the face of ongoing and increasing antisemitism, Council should take a strong stance to combat antisemitism in our city and provide the practical tools, such as the IHRA non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism, to identify antisemitism when and wherever it manifests in our community.

#### THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT the City of Vancouver adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism and list of illustrative examples, as adopted by the IHRA plenary on May 26, 2016, and the Government of Canada in June 2019, which reads:

*“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”*

- B. THAT Council direct staff to share this motion and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism with the Vancouver Police Board, Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver Park Board and Vancouver School Board for their review and consideration as an additional practical and educational tool, in addition to any existing working definitions, in identifying antisemitism.

Source: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>

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<sup>i</sup> Since 2005, the United Nations and its member states have held commemoration ceremonies to mark the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and to honour the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust. The purpose of this Day is to commemorate the victims of the Nazi regime, and to promote Holocaust education throughout the world.

<sup>ii</sup> The stated purpose of an August 2022 staff memo to Mayor and Council, which followed up on a March 2021 Anti-Racism and Cultural Redress update to Mayor and Council, was to provide an update on the development of an anti-racism action plan as directed through Council motion 13927: Standing Up to the Rise in Anti-Asian Racism, All Racism & Hate Crimes 13927 (Nov 2020). The work to address the Council motion 13367: Combatting Anti-Semitism in Vancouver 13367 (Jul 2019) was included as part of this effort. <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/2022-08-05-cm-update-on-anti-racism-strategy.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> In 2020, Mayor and Council passed a motion that the International Holocaust Remembrance Day would become one of Vancouver’s official observances.