

« Au coeur de la vie montréalaise : le nouveau schéma
de couverture de services de l'agglomération de
Montréal »

Brief presented by B'nai Brith Canada – Quebec Region

to the

The Public Security Commission of the City of Montreal

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The League for Human Rights, an agency of B'nai Brith Canada, is a national volunteer agency dedicated to combating antisemitism and racism. The objectives of the League include advocating for human rights for all Canadians, building inter-community relations, and the limitation of racial discrimination and bigotry. The League accomplishes these goals through educational programs, community action and legal/legislative interventions.

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1. BACKGROUND: THE ROLE OF B'NAI BRITH AS A JEWISH COMMUNITY HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

B'nai Brith Canada – Quebec region is pleased to take this opportunity to offer its recommendations to the City of Montreal Public Security Commission's public consultation process, in order to contribute to the Montreal Police Service's new plan for service provision under the amalgamated City of Montreal.

B'nai Brith Canada is the independent voice of the Jewish community, representing its interests nationwide to government, non-governmental organizations, law enforcement and the wider Canadian public. Since 1875, it has been respected for its groundbreaking work on matters relating to antisemitism, racism and human rights, its strong advocacy on the pressing issues of the day, and the important social services it provides.

It undertakes a range of human rights work through its *League for Human Rights* and *Institute for International Affairs*, monitoring human rights abuses in Canada and worldwide. It advocates on behalf of communities in distress, intervening with the federal and provincial governments, as well as in international fora, on a wide range of issues spanning the civil, political, religious, and cultural sectors.

Here in Canada the *League for Human Rights* is tasked with combating antisemitism, racism, and bigotry. It maintains a 24 hour a day, seven day a week, Anti-Hate Hotline offering assistance to victims of antisemitism and hate-motivated crimes. *League* professionals interact on an ongoing basis with the community, the police, synagogues and schools, legal and legislative experts and government agencies that deal with racism, in an effort to provide victims of hate-related crime with assistance, support and referral, as necessary, to law enforcement, human rights bodies and/or legal assistance.

For more than two decades the *League* has published an annual *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents in Canada*. This documentation of antisemitic incidents by region, and analysis of patterns of antisemitic occurrence, is the single most credible source on antisemitism in this country and is cited world-wide by government agencies, social policy planners and law enforcement bodies. According to *Statistics Canada*, the Audit is likely "the best data available on the incidence of hate crimes, providing a unique historical record of a particular form of hate activity in Canada".

B'nai Brith has been at the forefront of anti-racism and human rights education through the *League's Taking Action against Hate* program, which empowers vulnerable minorities to counter bias and prejudice against them. It has engaged in human rights cases affecting all minorities and spanning a range of human rights issues, such as, in recent years, the Roma case and the Mugesera file.

Most recently, B'nai Brith Canada coordinated its 3rd International Symposium on Hate on the Internet in Toronto, which brought together participants from the law enforcement, governmental, legal/legislative, industry, educational and community sectors to work towards global, multi-disciplinary solutions to the problem of web-based hate and extremism. The success of this Symposium, coupled by the demand for the dissemination of lessons learned, spawned a local Montreal initiative, in which B'nai Brith – Quebec Region organized an expert panel discussion in collaboration with the English Montreal School Board and Royal Vale School to examine the potential dangers of Internet use for children and teenagers, and formulate approaches they can employ to help protect Internet users of all ages. The goal of this program was to provide parents, caregivers, school administrators and teachers with a greater understanding of the problem, as well as concrete tools designed to empower them towards recognizing potential dangers of Internet use and to prevent online harassment, exploitation and cybercrime. This event featured two of Canada's leading academics in the field of hate on the Internet and cyberbullying, as well as a Sergeant-Detective from the Montreal Police Service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS: RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

2.1. *Preserving the neighbourhood police department*

Over the twenty-five year history of the League's *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents*, several patterns of incident occurrence have been observed, most notably that antisemitic incidents tend to occur where the greatest number of Jewish people reside. In this sense:

- The majority of antisemitic incidents tend to occur in the province of Ontario, followed by Quebec;
- In the province of Quebec, the majority of incidents tend to occur on the Island of Montreal, as opposed to Regional Quebec;
- On the Island of Montreal, the majority of incidents tend to occur in the neighbourhoods of Snowdon, Hampstead and Cote St-Luc, where the Montreal Jewish population is concentrated.

It is for this reason that B'nai Brith believes so strongly in the value of **maintaining the presence and operation of local police stations 9 and 11, as well as 25 and 26, which are located in heart of the Montreal Jewish community.**

While the Jewish community has long integrated into Quebec society in many respects, there remain several distinctive characteristics unique to the Jewish population that contribute to the need for a continued existence of local police stations.

- According to police reports, the Jewish community was the most targeted group for hate crimes on the Island Montreal in 2006.
- According to the 2001 Census, 28.7% of Holocaust survivors living in Canada reside in Montreal, with the majority living in the neighbourhoods of Cote. St Luc and Snowdon. As a result of their life experience and exposure to the vilest forms of hatred during the Holocaust, this group is particularly affected by antisemitic incidents and require a police station that is sensitive to this reality.
- Seniors comprise more than a third (35.1%) of the Cote St. Luc Jewish population. Among those Jews 65 years and older, 37.9% identified themselves as disabled. Despite the Montreal Police Services' efforts to increase the number of options for citizens to file a police complaint, seniors challenged by frailty or immobility who are largely unaccustomed to using the Internet or telephone to access police services require the close proximity of a neighbourhood police station.

Over the past 10 years, B'nai Brith has cultivated a relationship with both Commanders and police officers alike in these areas to the extent that they now well understand the sensitivity and impact of acts of antisemitism on the community. Increasingly, members of the Jewish community feel a sense of empathy and understanding from the police personnel assigned to these neighbourhoods. This is particularly significant given the increased sensitivity that is needed when dealing with victims of hate-related activity. The after-effects of what might be considered a relatively mild incident in the eyes of the authorities, partly because it may not meet the legal definition of a hate crime, can nevertheless be devastating. As noted in our 2004 *Audit*:

It has been noted that hate crimes have an impact not only on the victim, but also on his or her community. This hate-related activity is designed to intimidate the victim and members of the victim's community, leaving them feeling isolated, vulnerable, and unprotected by the law.

The personal attack, though, is perhaps the most painful. Core aspects of the victim's identity and community affiliation are affected, and the distress is intensified because the incident represents a serious attack on a fundamental aspect of the victim's personal identity.

Researchers have noted hate crime offenders are sending a message to members of a certain group that they are unwelcome in a particular neighbourhood, community, school, or workplace, and that hate crimes are not random, uncontrollable, or inevitable occurrences. Society can successfully intervene to reduce or prevent these occurrences.

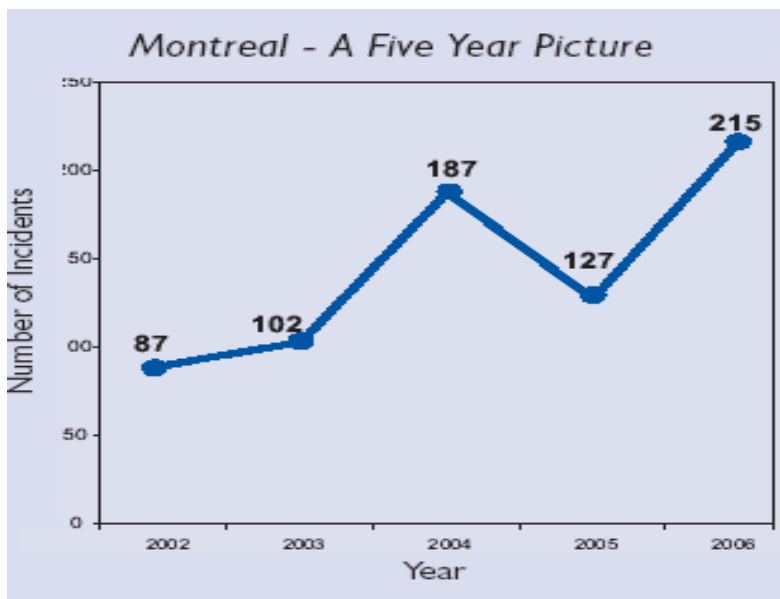
It is vital to ensure that the local police stations are staffed by officers trained to recognize the hallmarks of a hate crime and, as first responders, to deal with the incident effectively and with compassion before referring the case to a specialized unit equipped to investigate hate-motivated crimes. In our experience, when victims and their communities feel that the police and judicial system do not take their complaints seriously, they are less likely to have faith in the system and co-operate with it. It is for this reason that B'nai Brith has advocated so strongly for the maintenance of the local police stations located within the Jewish community.

At the same time, B'nai Brith recognizes that much of the support for victims comes through community organizations such as our own, which provide a range of resources - from anti-hate education to direct counselling to referral services - geared to meeting both the short term and the long term needs of the victims. Such work has a positive impact on the victims' quality of life by offering front-line rapid response, validating the experiences victim suffer and helping to rebuild the confidence of these individuals, their families and communities. As a community organization staffed by recognized experts in the field of racism and antisemitism, B'nai Brith is well positioned to provide this service. However, it is critical that our work is supported by a police force that is present, visible and familiar to the community.

2.2 Specialized hate crime units

Since 1997, when the Montreal Urban Community launched its new local police department model, B'nai Brith Canada and the Jewish community as a whole have benefited from a closer and more involved partnership with police. Over the long term, this strengthened association has resulted in greater reciprocal information sharing, which has benefited both partners.

While the Montreal Police Service has clearly demonstrated its ability to cultivate relationships with community groups and individual citizens, its capacity to respond to certain types of crimes remains limited due to the absence of a specific expertise from the existing police force in Montreal. As stated in the consultation document, local police officers have increasingly adopted a role as 'generalists', whereby they must demonstrate their skills and ability to intervene in a wide range of areas, including crime prevention, road safety, community involvement and youth intervention. These demands have necessarily resulted in a police mandate that is a challenge on a practical level. It is for this reason that B'nai Brith has advocated for the **creation of specialized hate crime units with formal expertise in determining and investigating hate-motivated crimes**, capable of dealing with the ever-increasing reality of crime targeted against minority and other identifiable groups on the Island of Montreal.



Over the past five years, B'nai Brith's League for Human Rights has recorded a 147% increase in antisemitic incidents on the Island of Montreal, where the number of cases has risen from 87 in 2002 to 215 in 2006.

In fact, just in the last year, the Island of Montreal witnessed a startling increase in antisemitic incidents, with the number of cases increasing by 69.3% (127 in 2005 to 215 in 2006). The dramatic rise in the number of these incidents was reflected in each incident category: there were 142 cases of harassment compared to 78 cases in 2005, 63 cases of vandalism compared to 43 cases in 2005, and 10 incidents of

violence compared with six cases in 2005.

The incidents included the firebombing of a Jewish day school, physical assaults against members of the Jewish community, desecration of synagogues and Jewish community property, and overt antisemitic statements and public vilification of the Jewish people at anti-Israel rallies.

This situation is even more troubling when one considers that experts estimate only 10% of hate-motivated incidents are ever reported to authorities, which means that the figures cited in B'nai Brith's *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents* only hints at the gravity of the situation in relation to the rise of antisemitism. In fact, the long-term increase in incidents directly contradicts the notion that the number of complaints is low, or that hate-related activity is in some way limited or contained.

In order to effectively reinforce the capacity of the Montreal Police Service to operate at the core of Montreal life, it is critical, now more than ever, that the Montreal Police Service follow the example of several other major Canadian cities, including Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa, and establish a dedicated hate crime unit.

Experience in other jurisdictions have shown clearly that specialized hate crime units, composed of police officers with special training concerning crimes motivated by hate or bias, are in a strategic position to meet the growth of hate crimes. Specialized training in this area will ensure more thorough investigations, and thus provide better service to the victims most directly impacted. Focusing on hate-motivated activity, the officers will be able to develop an expertise in areas such as hate group activity and internet hate, as well as the more common types of crimes. In addition to the conventional police duties of responding to such incidents, the officers of such units are in a unique position to foster positive community relations by participating in police-community activities and outreach events.

3. CONCLUSION

Given the increasing number of hate motivated activity targeting the Jewish Community in recent years, it is clear that preserving the relationship that has been built-up between the police and the community is of paramount importance. We hope that the new plan for service provision will be sensitive to these issues and therefore urge the Public Security Commission of the City of Montreal to accept our recommendations.

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