

To the President, Executive Committee, Director of Professional Practice,
Registrar & CEO,
Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers
250 Bloor Street East, Suite 1000,
Toronto, Ontario
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We understand and are heartened that the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers has struck a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Group to increase diversity, equity and inclusion - "a key priority in the college's strategic plan, " in its role as a regulatory body. We are in agreement that these are important issues, for our profession and hence our regulatory body to address.

In your letter of May 31, 2021, you state that the mobilization against anti-Black, Indigenous and Asian racism has stimulated you to interpret "how and when to interpret your public mandate more broadly". We agree that racist activity is important for the profession to react to appropriately.

In your letter of June 9, 2021, in response to the hate crime murder of a Muslim family in London, you condemn, and we condemn with you, the evidence of racism and anti- Muslim hate in Canada which must also be urgently addressed.

We assume that the College is also aware that in Canada and worldwide, anti-Semitic incidents have taken a steep rise. We are deeply concerned, however, that the College has not seen fit to speak out against, or even to acknowledge the growing rise of anti-Semitism. As reported by toronto.com, according to a recent report from the Toronto Police, in 2020, the Toronto Jewish Community, despite making up just under four per cent of the City's population was the most targeted group with occurrences increasing by 40% from 2019 to 2020 and making up more than a third of all hate crimes.

As reported on CTV News on May 31, 2021, B'nai Brith Canada has reported a tremendous increase in May 2021 alone in acts of violence against Jews across the country and reports that the Jewish community across Canada is on edge. The UJA Federation of Greater Toronto has confirmed that there were more than 50 incidents of anti-Semitism in the GTA in May, and these have been mirrored by a spike in online antisemitism. The UJA states that we are now living through a new volume and viciousness of antisemitism in our City. Many Jews living in Toronto including some of us, who belong to the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, are feeling threatened and nervous.

Other institutions have responded to these developments. The University of Toronto has struck a formal Anti-Semitism Working Group. The Government of Canada announced on June 11, 2021, that it will convene an emergency summit on anti-Semitism.

In the face of this growing anti-Semitism, our College which has set out specifically to deal with "inclusion," is not only silent but the silence itself speaks, in that it communicates that anti-Semitism is not an issue for the College, and does not deserve or need to be included. This not only excludes equitable treatment of some of your members but sends a message of our exclusion to the community, at large. In your silence, you abandon us to those who would discriminate and perpetrate hate against us, with impunity.

We want our experience of professional and personal anti-Semitism to matter and to be acknowledged by the OCSWSSW. In short, we want and are calling out to be included when matters of racism, discrimination, equity, diversity, inclusion and historic persecution are raised by the College.

The Task Force, as its selection criteria focused on the criteria of “lived experience with priority being given to members who are Black, Indigenous, or people of colour, and/or from other equity seeking groups. As stated the Task Group includes representation from “ Black, East/Southeast Asian, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, South Asian, Muslim communities as well as persons living with a disability.”

Are we correct in assuming that the Jewish community is not represented on the Task Group? The apparent lack of representation would not concern us so much if the College actually condemned the rise in anti-Semitism and recognized anti-Semitism as an issue for the Task Force’s consideration. But the lack of acknowledgement of the issue coupled with the lack of representation, makes us very concerned.

Accordingly, we have two questions.

Is the College prepared:

- To acknowledge and condemn the recent rise in Anti-Semitism?
- To include a discussion of the impact of Anti-Semitism in the Task Force deliberations?

We look forward to your response and hope that you will respond to each of the undersigned OCSWSSW Members.

Names omitted to protect members' privacy