

To : Senate Committee Members addressing Antisemitism

My name is Kim Kazur and I am with the Canadian Jewish Labour Committee. CJLC was formed just over a year ago by union members across Canada who are experiencing antisemitism in their union organizations. I am a longstanding union member and activist. While I am not Jewish, what I witnessed at my union's 2024 Convention, the worst of some members, spurred me to action. If you are ever interested, I can arrange for a meeting with multiple union members who have been targeted, harmed and devastated by their unions. Their stories are painful to hear.

CJLC currently works with more than 40 provincial and federal unions and associations, that have reached out to us, and that number is growing. Antisemitism is pervasive throughout unions – often masked as Palestinian support. This submission speaks specifically to antisemitism and Jew hatred going unaddressed in our unions.

Union leaders dismiss complaints by denying Jew hatred, while defending it as mere criticism of Israel. Union presidents continuously ignore or refuse to meet with Jewish members. They have protested and chanted publicly. One “outed” himself as two different anonymous reddit accounts that posted vile and hateful antisemitic comments to union members <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/cape-union-president-anti-israel-complaint>

Another, following a successful motion that all union leadership to take antisemitism training, yet the organization selected to provide the training was Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) =. IJV does not speak for mainstream Jews, represents just 3% of Canada's Jewish community and yet, they were chosen as antisemitism experts. This, despite the fact that there are mainstream, recognized organizations that provide such type of training.

Three Unions (OPSEU, CUPE, CAPE) currently have complaints against them at the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal (OHRT) for antisemitism – dozens of members in these unions reported their experiences to their unions and were ignored or dismissed. Because the current legislation does not allow any other avenues of complaint, this was determined to be the best way for members' complaints to be acknowledged and addressed properly. These three unions are represented by legal teams against their unions. Unfortunately, given the lawsuits, they cannot share their experiences with the committee, at this time.

CJLC is member driven and the current steering committee represents 12 different unions – public and private unions. There are common themes throughout our unions – harassment, isolation, fear, hurt, and anger. Jewish members are not being heard by their leaders. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, which was adopted by Canada, eight provinces and multiple countries, is

not being respected, let alone used, by unions. In fact, leadership is pushing back against IHRA, while endorsing Anti-Palestine Racism (APR) definition, which has not been recognized or adopted by any government, anywhere, and in effect negates Jewish identity, further alienating Jewish union members. At a recent annual general membership meeting, after three union members spoke out against adopting APR, they were labelled as racist by a pro-Palestine attendee and identified as the very reason APR is needed. The accusation was not called out by leadership nor were the three members allowed to defend themselves from the accusation.

APR has not gone through the same rigorous study and was written by a group of militant Canadians, without peer review or examination, either in Canada or around the world. That definition does not allow for questioning or criticizing the Palestinian narrative, or even Hamas. Supporting the right of Jews to self-determination is considered racist under their definition. In brief, APR is a dangerous weapon that seeks to erase Jewish identity, to intimidate the 94% of Canadian Jews who support Jewish self-determination, to create a zero-sum game and is highly divisive. In brief, APR is a form of bullying and should be rejected outright.

Attached, are three testimonials from CJLC members. They are being submitted unsigned, **as members are afraid to do so openly and fear repercussions within their unions.**

Our steering committee members have watched the Senate Hearings, discussed how our unions can return to being representatives of all workers within their workplaces and their unions, and we would like to offer recommendations to the committee:

- a) **Unions stay out of geopolitics and focus on their core union mandates.** Overtly political positions are being adopted on behalf of members. Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns are a strong example of that. Only a very small percentage of members are eligible to vote for or against resolutions. Jewish representation is almost non-existent. AMAPCEO – the union of Ontario’s Professional Employees has non-partisan language, (Resolutions are deemed out of order “if they formulate partisan political statements or actions), which eliminates divisive ideological causes from entering their union. Their website describes them as a politically nonpartisan union. <https://amapceo.on.ca/about> AMAPCEO’s non-partisan language is the model that all unions should adopt so the focus of union work is for the good of the entire membership.
- b) **Mandate “all member” votes,** not just a small percentage of delegates if union action paints all members with a political tone. **Demand** a 70% quorum in these votes – make it the real majority.

- c) **Mandate an opt-in/opt-out process** for members when unions stray outside of their core mandates. Every union is mandated to work for all of their members on issues that impact the whole membership. Personal political causes are not core union work. Currently, every Jewish member of a union **MUST** allow a portion of their union dues to support antisemitism and Jew hatred. If any other recognized equity deserving group was forced to pay for being targeted with hate, there would be significant backlash. Right now, Jews are being forced to fund political ideology that goes against their actual existence.
- d) **Develop a mechanism to file against union leadership** – currently a human rights complaint is the only process and in some unions, leadership has manipulated bylaws to suit themselves. In one union, an independent investigator can investigate but cannot draw conclusions or make recommendations. Those decisions are left to the very leadership responsible for the harassment and discrimination.
- e) **Expand “failure to represent” applications** – As Jews, members are not being represented. Their religion, their ethnicity and their country or origin are targets of their union leadership. No union currently speaks about supporting their Jewish members or protecting them from radicalists. Jewish members are left on their own, intimidated and afraid.
- f) **Expand Health and Safety Language** – to include all union spaces – conventions, conferences, training and education, meetings, gatherings. Currently, health and safety legislation only pertains to an employer’s location. Members who attend any type of union activity or event, and are exposed to antisemitism, are not protected in those spaces. They are also entitled to a healthy and safe environment.
- g) **Create an Ombudsperson** - to investigate member complaints against their union if the actions of the union fall outside the scope of the union’s core mandate. Ensure the program can have authority to address those actions meaningfully.
- h) **Recognize Jews as an equity deserving group** – Currently almost all unions do not consider being Jewish as part of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion groups, often labelling them as a religious group. The treatment of Jewish members by equity groups is appalling. Equity units campaign vigorously for Palestine, did not condemn October 7th and do not call out or admit to antisemitism. Instead, they delegitimize and deliberately exclude Jews, canceling and silencing them.
- i) **Protect Jewish Canadians** – current legislation needs to be strengthened. Normalization of Jew hate must be called out and people need to know that their words and actions have consequences.

Submissions follow

Submission 1 – Incident Summary Illustrating Systemic Antisemitism in a Large Ontario Labour Organization

An Israeli-Canadian faculty member active in labour and equity advocacy has experienced repeated incidents of antisemitic bias, exclusion, and silencing within a large Ontario labour organization. These experiences reflect broader challenges facing Jewish members in progressive or equity-driven institutions where antisemitism is often minimized or reframed as political disagreement. To maintain privacy and consistency in presentation, the summary is written in the third person but describes the firsthand experiences of the author.

Key Examples:

- **Discriminatory Speech & Silence:** Public demonstrations featuring the organization's symbols included chants calling for violence against Jewish people. When the member raised concerns, leadership dismissed them under the guise of "freedom of expression."
- **Biased Educational Programming:** Internal presentations and webinars promoted one-sided, inflammatory narratives about the Middle East, denying Jewish indigeneity. Jewish participants' questions were ignored or silenced. Internal equity training reinforced selective approaches to racism that excluded antisemitism. Jewish identity was omitted from course materials and demographic surveys, facilitators dismissed concerns about bias, and participants were permitted to display political symbols hostile to Jewish people. Jewish perspectives were misrepresented or restricted publicly, even when shared respectfully as examples of systemic discrimination.
- **Failure of Complaint Processes:** Formal human-rights complaints were dismissed on procedural grounds, with decision-makers claiming antisemitism was "not linked to a protected ground." Absence of accountability reinforced a perception of institutional bias.
- **Exclusion from Equity Structures:** Despite the creation of a Jewish caucus through approved resolutions, the organization delayed formal recognition for months, including from official lists of equity groups, reducing Jewish visibility.
- **Hostile Online Environment:** Employees and representatives of the organization publicly posted content referring to "Zionist bullshit" and other violent, demeaning statements about Jews and Israelis. Complaints about this conduct were not acted upon.
- **Leadership Minimization:** During meetings, leadership compared Jewish members' harm from antisemitism to "the discomfort of white people in anti-racism training," trivializing Jewish experiences as equivalent to dominant-group discomfort.
- **Fear and Retaliation:** Feeling unsafe attending meetings due to repeated exposure to antisemitic rhetoric and the risk of professional retaliation for speaking out.

Broader Pattern:

Across these incidents, antisemitism was dismissed as political rather than recognized as discrimination. The result has been what psychologists describe as traumatic invalidation, the repeated erasure of legitimate identity-based harm.

Impact:

The member describes feeling isolated, anxious, and mistrustful within professional and labour spaces. Despite a lifelong commitment to social justice and union activism rooted in a family tradition, including their great-grandmother's role in helping to start Toronto's Jewish hospitals, the institutional response to antisemitism has eroded their sense of belonging and dignity. The ongoing exposure to hostility and minimization has caused ongoing anxiety, requiring them to seek therapy in order to continue participating in union events.

Submission 2 – from a member of a different union

Unions have created an environment in which they face little to no accountability for their actions. Across jurisdictions and professions, it is consistently the most dedicated and radical members that choose to be active in union leadership. This observation could also be made about student unions. This is an unfortunate reality of representative democracy, and a Catch 22: we don't engage with our union because we don't like their behaviour and priorities, but the way to encourage new priorities is through engagement with the union.

In the context of the federal public service, lawmakers could consider expanding the jurisdiction of the FPSLRB to hear complaints by union members against their own union leadership. This board's mandate primarily relates to disputes between employees (represented by their bargaining agents) and their employer. Where a conflict relates to actions between representatives of the bargaining agent and a member, Section 190 of the FPSLRA limits the board's jurisdiction to a small number of rigid situations, notably if the bargaining agent commits an unfair labour practice within the meaning of Section 185. This includes s.187 - unfair representation by bargaining agent.

FPSLRB jurisprudence has established that a bargaining agent's duty of fair representation comes into play under only two conditions: (1) when a bargaining agent is representing an employee in a matter governed by the Act or the collective agreement, and (2) when the representation pertains to an issue between the employee and the employer (see *Sereduik v. Union of Canadian Correctional Officers Syndicat des agents correctionnels du Canada* and *Hancock v. Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada*). The FPSLRBA understandably places the focus of the Board on the role of employee organizations performing their core functions, that of being the bargaining agent of employees and the intermediary between the employee and the employer.

However unions are increasingly taking actions outside their primary mandate, and there is no forum for members, except for union elections, to hold them accountable for their behaviours.

Alternatively, if lawmakers do not think the FPSLRB is the appropriate venue for this redress, they could create an ombudsperson that could investigate member complaints against their unions when the actions under review are outside the scope of the union's formal mandate in the workplace. That ombudsperson, however, would need to have actual powers. Powers to investigate and powers to demand changes in union practices. A body that just offers recommendations will be of little use in changing behaviour.

Due to my sustained engagement calling out antisemitism in my union, including support for formal complaints against the President, procedural challenges at public meetings, submitting resolutions, open letters, I have no faith that my union represents me in good faith, or would help me would do anything more than the bare minimum in an individual dispute with my employer.

The law, as written, requires me to have an issue, seek redress, and then any concerns over fair representation could only come after the fact. But lawmakers could create some other mechanism to deal with union leaders behaviour towards its members in matters other than their relations with the employer. If unions are going to continue to step outside their lane, then that lane needs some guardrails.

Submission 3 - My Experience at My Union's Convention — Spring 2024

Day 1

After checking into the hotel, I headed to the convention venue. As I entered the building, I noticed many attendees handing out flyers and wearing campaign shirts in support of one of the candidates running for union president. Among them were several small groups wearing keffiyehs and distributing "Free Palestine" flyers. Walking through this was uncomfortable and intimidating as a delegate and member. When approached, I politely declined a flyer and continued my way, but it was unsettling to see such open political messaging in this environment.

Day 2

The official first day of the convention was even more charged. As I entered the building, the halls were filled with people distributing flyers—some supporting union candidates, others promoting political messages about the Israel– Hamas conflict, using terms such as "genocide," "apartheid," and "Free Palestine." Inside, many attendees wore keffiyehs, shirts, and buttons expressing similar views. Sitting among so many people openly supporting a BDS resolution felt intimidating.

Later, I walked through the marketplace area and noticed a table promoting pro-Palestinian activities. It featured a large "Free Palestine" banner and invited people to write messages on it. The display included a clipboard labeled "Union Labor for Palestine Caucus," which gave the impression that it was an official union caucus. However, it appeared to be a self-created group of members rather than a formally recognized caucus. It was troubling to see such a setup seemingly allowed by convention organizers, suggesting tacit support from leadership.

I did not feel physically threatened, but I did not feel safe being openly Jewish in that space.

As I was leaving the convention floor at the end of the day, I was stopped by someone handing out pro-Palestinian flyers. This individual was polite but insistent when I declined, asking me why I didn't want the material. I explained my perspective that BDS is antisemitic at its core and that such activism contributes to rising antisemitism globally. Although the exchange remained civil, I felt it was inappropriate and uncomfortable to be put in that position during a professional union convention.

Day 3

The atmosphere remained the same—flyers, slogans, and pro-Palestinian messaging were still prevalent.

While walking to a nearby coffee shop, I was approached by another delegate who thanked me for speaking at the microphone earlier. They told me they were also Jewish and had been feeling isolated. I shared my contact information so we could stay connected.

It struck me as deeply ironic that, within a union that claims to uphold principles of respect and inclusion, Jewish and Israeli members were feeling alienated and disrespected. Some members promoting pro-Palestinian positions identified as Jewish themselves, and their presence was

used to suggest that these actions were not antisemitic. But having a few Jewish supporters does not make such actions any less antisemitic in nature.

Day 4

This was by far the most difficult day. A motion was introduced to move a BDS resolution up the agenda so it could be debated immediately. The motion passed. The resolution was motivated by a speaker who identified as Jewish, and about fifty people wearing keffiyehs lined up at the microphone to voice their support.

Before debate could begin, a group at the back of the convention floor held up “Free Palestine” signs, even though signs were not permitted in that space. I took a few photos to document what was happening.

As I moved to the microphone to speak against the resolution, a Harassment Officer approached me, informing me that a complaint had been made about me taking photos. I explained that I was waiting to speak and would discuss it afterward. The session ended before the resolution could be debated or voted on.

After the close of the session, I met with the officer, who said someone had complained that I took their picture and that they “did not feel safe.” I told the officer honestly that I had photographed the signs, not individuals, but it was possible someone appeared in the background unintentionally. I explained that the event was being livestreamed, officially photographed, and recorded—there were no stated rules prohibiting taking photos on the convention floor.

The officer reminded me that a formal complaint could be filed against me. I said that if that happened, I would file my own, as it was clear to me that this incident was being used to prevent me from speaking.

I left feeling deeply disheartened. The experience made it painfully clear that within a space meant to represent and protect all workers, there was little tolerance or safety for Jewish members who held differing views.