

It is with sincere gratitude that I accept the George Joseph Cooper Scholarship. This has been a truly humbling experience, and I am deeply honoured to have been selected as this year's award recipient. I would like to thank the scholarship selection committee and the Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation.

When my family moved to Ottawa in 2004 from Argentina, we were welcomed with open arms by the city's Jewish community. This vibrant cohort actively ensured our well-being, from donating furniture and food items, offering us carpool rides, to simply providing us with a network of friends to whom we could turn. I have remained heavily involved in the Ottawa Jewish community ever since, driven to contribute to its further development.

From summers with the JCC Travelling Sports Camp, afternoons and weekends spent at Temple Israel Religious School, both as a student and later as a teaching assistant, to becoming an active member of my congregation's high school youth group, which I would later lead as President in my 12th Grade year, the Ottawa Jewish community has always served as my second home in more ways than one.

When I later transitioned into university, my pride as a Jew and sense of duty to our community were reinforced. At Carleton University, I experienced frequent acts of Antisemitism and anti-Zionism, and, for the first time, did not know who to turn to for strength and protection. In response, I transformed my passion for Jewish life into what would become my purpose throughout my undergraduate career. I surrounded myself with fellow Jewish students through the Hillel and Chabad student groups, establishing myself as a leader within these communities, eventually becoming Hillel Ottawa President in my final year. I engaged with Carleton University's Zelikovitz Centre for Jewish Studies, enrolling in their Developing Future Leaders program, which granted me an internship placement at the Jewish Federation of Ottawa (JFO). At JFO, I witnessed first-hand the immense effort behind uplifting the Ottawa Jewish community and was privileged with contributing my passion to this crucial task. I also sought opportunities to enhance my Zionism. I was accepted into the StandWithUs organization Emerson Fellowship program, where I trained in effective Israeli advocacy, navigating challenging conversations on Israeli issues, and spearheaded numerous campus events educating Carleton students about Israel. My participation in Jewish life on campus not only strengthened my resolve as a proud Jew and Zionist, but also shaped my undergraduate career. Subsequently, these experiences culminated in my current role as the Director of Cultural Affairs at the Embassy of Israel in Canada, where, for two years, I proudly represented Israel across a variety of Canadian audiences and worked closely with partners in the Federal and Municipal Government, the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, CIJA, Hillel, and many others in the wider Ottawa Jewish community to reinforce friendships between both countries.

Once again, I am extremely grateful and humbled to be the recipient of this year's George Joseph Cooper Scholarship. This award has already had an immediate and immeasurable impact on my ability to continue my studies and pursue new opportunities for personal and professional growth. As I begin a new chapter this Fall as a master's student at Tel Aviv University, not only will this scholarship allow me to pursue the degree I have dreamt of for years, but it will also grant me the opportunity to represent the Ottawa Jewish Community in Israel. Already, the funds

from this award have greatly alleviated significant financial barriers, which, going forward, will allow me to focus my time and efforts on excelling in this new academic program and build new, meaningful connections with leaders in my field and in Israel's rich and diverse Jewish community. Further, I look forward to returning to Ottawa following the completion of my studies and giving back to the Jewish community by contributing the new insights, skills, and experiences I will have gained on my journey.

To the George Joseph Cooper Scholarship Committee, the Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation, and the wider Ottawa Jewish community, I thank you for granting me this opportunity of a lifetime, and I look forward to continuing to make you all proud.

With utmost gratitude and appreciation,

Dario Chaiquin

2021 George Joseph Cooper Scholarship Recipient