

GJC Scholarship Final Essay

Essay Prompt: The impact this scholarship has on your academic pursuits and how you, in turn, are impacting our community.

From my earliest memories through my adult years, the Ottawa Jewish community has been integral to my upbringing and my Jewish identity. I was born and raised as a part of the Ottawa Jewish Community, and some of my earliest memories have been at Machzikei Hadas synagogue, and Torah Academy (the predecessor to Ottawa Torah Day school). I attended both Ottawa Torah Institute and the Ottawa Jewish Community School during my high school years and was an active and contributing member of both the student Chabad and Hillel Campus organizations as I completed my University of Ottawa undergraduate degree. My family has been an integral part of the Ottawa Jewish community and beyond for close to thirty years, and my personal connection to the community runs deep.

It has therefore been a tremendous honour to be named the 2025 recipient of the George Joseph Cooper Scholarship. This scholarship is more than just a monetary award. It represents a communal recognition of my contributions to the Jewish community, and serves as motivation to continue standing up for justice, for Israel and for defending against antisemitism.

As a law student at McGill University, I made a conscious effort towards building bridges — fostering connection, dialogue, and mutual understanding among students from a wide range of backgrounds. As an executive of the Jewish Law Students Association (an organization of which I later became President) and a member of the board of directors of Rohr Chabad Jewish Student Centre at McGill, I made it a priority to engage in the wider community on campus, inviting non-Jewish friends and peers to Shabbat dinners and other cultural events.

In that same spirit, I promoted partnerships between student clubs from different communities. In coordination with the Muslim and Christian Law Student Associations, I helped create an interfaith event bringing prominent legal scholars from the major faiths together to convene regarding Quebec's Bill 21 — a controversial law that disproportionately affects religious minorities. I also helped launch McGill's first-ever Droit et Diversité event, a celebration of diversity in the legal profession.

After the October 7 attacks, the atmosphere on campus changed practically overnight. Where I had hoped for sympathy and solidarity, I instead encountered a wave of hostility, misinformation, and antisemitism. As President of the Jewish Law Students Association (JLSA), I quickly recognized that our mission needed to evolve. We had to become more than a cultural club — the JLSA had to become a source of strength, community, and advocacy for Jewish students suddenly facing fear and isolation.

I refocused our efforts on both support and resistance: support for Jewish students grappling with their identity and safety, and resistance against the rising tide of antisemitism. I drafted and issued a series of public statements and op-eds to directly challenge false narratives. I met with

university administrators, student government leaders, and McGill alumni to advocate for real, actionable responses to antisemitism on campus.

I realized that to accomplish what I wanted, I needed more resources and support. I built a nationwide collaborative network of JLSA Presidents from law schools across Canada and helped spur the creation of a national Canadian Jewish Law Student Alliance. I connected and collaborated with other Jewish graduate student associations on celebrations like Purim and Chanukah, further strengthening intercommunity ties.

We also pioneered groundbreaking programming. One highlight was the inaugural Alternative to Big Law event, designed to support students who hadn't secured jobs at large firms. Hosted at the historic Maison Louis-Joseph Forget, the event laid the groundwork for a long-term tradition that bridges law students with alternative legal career paths.

I am particularly proud of a recent initiative, whereby I organized and co-led the first-ever Israel trip for Montreal law students. In partnership with the organization ITrek, from May 2-9, 2025. I brought a group of Jewish and non-Jewish McGill and University of Montreal law students to explore Israel's legal, cultural, and social landscape first-hand. We visited the Knesset and the Supreme Court, the Old City of Jerusalem and the bustling downtown of Tel Aviv. This initiative represents a meaningful step in advancing campus understanding of Israel and building bridges between the Canadian legal world and Israeli society.

I hope that these activities will create a lasting and positive impact for the Jewish community going forward. These years of advocacy and community leadership have strengthened pride in my Jewish identity, sharpened my understanding of justice, and strengthened my belief in the power of community. This scholarship will support my continued legal studies, and provide the ongoing encouragement and impetus to continue leading towards a better future for the Jewish community going forward.