

Continuously, I'm contacted by community members who are concerned about overt antisemitism, microaggressions, and increasing anti-Israel sentiment. Children as young as Grade 2 are being told that others do not want to play with them because they are "Israeli", meaning Jewish. Young adults are telling me that there is a litmus test among their peers, if they say that they are Israeli or are Jewish, where the conversation becomes cooler. I am sure you may have anecdotes of your own.

One pillar of our strategic plan is to equip community members to understand antisemitism in all of its forms, to build the capacity to have conversations about antisemitism as well as engage in advocacy activities. It is very important that we continue to let our elected officials know about the concerns of our community. They may take this into consideration when planning policy, as well as in how they conduct their messaging on social media.

Earlier this month we had Shimon Fogel, CEO of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, brief community leaders about the current issues of antisemitism in Canada. Shimon described what we are seeing across the political spectrum. This week we invited people, who have showed concerns to us from a diverse cross section of our community, to meet with us and Heather McPherson, NDP Edmonton Strathcona MP and foreign affairs critic. We communicated our apprehensions to Heather about the tone of her messaging, the impact it has on Jewish Edmontonians for whom Israel is central to their identity, and for the security of our community. Heather listened and conveyed her interest in continued discussions.

While the policies of the Israeli government (when it is formed again) are not above criticism, people should not hold it to a standard that differs from any other country. We will always defend Israel's right to exist and thrive. We continue to advocate for the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism both locally and provincially. The Canadian government has formally adopted this definition as part of its national anti-racism strategy, and we will hold our elected officials accountable to it.

Israel is a country full of innovation, joyful culture, with a rich and varied people and, of course, incredible food. We hope you will join us in showcasing all of this and more at the Heritage Festival on July 31 and August 1. [You can sign up to volunteer](#). Mark it on your calendar, grab a few friends, come and say hello and support these efforts. Thanks to PosterTech Printing and Signage and the Linetskys, we are updating the informational posters inside the pavilion. I hope you will look inside of the pavilion and learn something new about Israel.

Shabbat Shalom,

*D. Lewitt*

Stacey