



TOWN OF AJAX
65 Harwood Avenue South
Ajax ON L1S 3S9 www.ajax.ca

The Rt Hon. Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Sent by E-Mail

June 24, 2021

Re: **Addressing Online Hate**

The following resolution was passed by Ajax Town Council at its meeting held June 21, 2021:

WHEREAS the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms enshrines legal protections to groups identified by colour, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or mental or physical disability;

AND WHEREAS religious groups, racialized communities, Blacks, Indigenous people, and LGBTQ2SI individuals are disproportionately targeted by online hate speech;

AND WHEREAS among reported hate crimes targeting a religion in 2019, the Jewish and Muslim populations continue to be the most frequent targets, accounting for 49% and 30% of crimes against a religion, respectively (Statistics Canada);

AND WHEREAS in 2019, there were more police-reported hate crimes targeting race or ethnicity, specifically Arab or West Asians and Blacks, as well an increase in crimes targeting sexual orientation (Statistics Canada);

AND WHEREAS with the rise of online hate speech on the Internet, the federal government must urgently introduce new laws to govern online spaces, and hold individuals and operators accountable as the current system is clearly failing – impacting mental health and putting all Canadians' freedoms at risk;

AND WHEREAS a poll (2021), conducted by Abacus Data for the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, documents the following:

- Widespread concern among Canadians about the rise and impact of online hate;
- 1 in 5 Canadians have experienced some form of online hate, harassment or aggressive behaviour;
- Racialized Canadians are almost three times more likely to have experienced this kind of behaviour online;
- Most Canadians believe the federal government should do more to prevent the spread of online hate and racism in Canada;

- 80 per cent of Canadians support a requirement that social media companies remove hateful content within 24 hours;

AND WHEREAS a federal election is expected to be held in fall 2021;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. Ajax Council supports the introduction of tougher federal online hate speech legislation, including a civil remedy for individuals to pursue; more effective enforcement of public incitement of hate; and compelling online operators to monitor and remove online hate in a timely matter or risk facing substantial fines;
2. Ajax Council calls on all the federal parties to put forth a national strategy on preventing the spread of online hate and racism in Canada for consideration by voters during the next federal election;
3. The Region of Durham and Durham Region Police Service through the development of the Region's Community Safety and Wellness Strategy consider the establishment of a specialized hate crime unit to pursue cases of online hate, and to conduct education and outreach on the importance of reporting hate crimes and hate incidents;
4. Ajax Council directs the Town's Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator to partner with faith-based groups and community organizations (i.e. YMCA's Block Hate: Building Resilience against Online Hate Speech) working to educate the public as to what constitutes online hate and how to report acts of online hate; and
5. This motion be distributed to the Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada; Hon. Mark Holland, MP for Ajax; Hon. Erin O'Toole, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada and Leader of the Official Opposition; Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada; Annamie Paul, Leader of the Green Party of Canada; Durham Region Members of Parliament; Chairman John Henry; and Durham Region municipalities.

If you require further information please contact me at 905-619-2529 ext. 3342 or alexander.harras@ajax.ca.

Sincerely,



Alexander Harras
Manager of Legislative Services/Deputy Clerk

Copy: Councillor A. Khan
Regional Councillor M. Crawford
Hon. Mark Holland, MP for Ajax
Hon. Erin O'Toole, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada and Leader of the Official Opposition
Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada
Annamie Paul, Leader of the Green Party of Canada
Durham Region Members of Parliament
Durham Regional Chair John Henry
All Durham Region municipalities