

Statement by Rabbi Saul Emanuel on behalf of the Jewish Community Council condemning the Suspension of the Expanded Security Infrastructure Program - New Funding Needed Now

Montreal: February 29, 2024

As reports of antisemitism continue to increase in every region of Canada, the Jewish Community Council (JCC) is stunned that the Government of Canada has surreptitiously suspended the Expanded Security Infrastructure Program (ESIP).

We are particularly upset that this decision was made without prior consultation or warning and announced late on Friday, February 16, on the eve of Shabbat with a deadline for applications set for Sunday, February 18. The JCC has in recent months worked with about 30 organizations on their requests for security funding. We were in the midst of working with many organizations on their applications, and we were given no time to complete them.

The rationale for halting ESIP was a lack of funds. Yet, from our perspective the Canadian government has its priorities out of whack. For months, we have been telling them that ESIP is underfunded and have been urging the Canadian government to do more to protect and defend the inclusive Canada we have built together.

The ramp-up in "lawlessness" targeting Jews has our community on edge. Children are reluctant to go to school, and adults are scared to attend services and even to do their daily chores. We need more, not less funding to ensure Jews feel safe at our schools, synagogues and other community institutions

We have been calling for changes to ESIP so that smaller organizations are able to access it. They are not applying for funding because they do not have the necessary financial resources to invest in security measures even if the Government of Canada is prepared to cover 50% of the costs. They do not have the capacity to cover even their portion of the costs.

We have been recommending that the Canadian Government adopt a sliding scale where a larger percentage of the costs are covered in accordance with the size and capacity of the institution. This change would ensure that smaller institutions can invest in the security they so desperately need.

Let me stress that Jewish organizations – large and small - are in danger. They are continuing to operate and provide services to our community without having the necessary security measures in place. They desperately need the Government of Canada's support. Rather than suspending ESIP and hoping no one will notice, the Government of Canada should be prioritizing our safety and security. It should immediately reinstate the program with adequate funding.

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