

Ministry of Education

Minister

315 Front Street West
Toronto ON M7A 0B8

Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre

315, rue Front Ouest
Toronto ON M7A 0B8



November 9, 2022

Ms. Diana Miles
Council Chair
Ontario College of Teachers
101 Bloor Street West
Toronto ON M5S 0A1

Dear Ms. Miles,

Antisemitic events have been on the rise in schools across Ontario, with over 50 incidents involving antisemitic hate symbols occurring in the Toronto District School Board alone in the 2021-22 school year.

According to the first teen study of Antisemitism and Holocaust knowledge in Canada conducted by Western University and Liberation 75 in 2021, 42% of students said they have unequivocally witnessed an antisemitic event. This leading study found that 1 in 3 students think that Holocaust was fabricated, exaggerated or unsure if actually happened. 40% of students learned about the Holocaust from social media, and only 54% knew how many Jews were killed in Holocaust.

Against this background, we can clearly see the imperative to provide members of the OCT with the tools and education they need for their own awareness and so that they may educate students about the true nature of and impact the Holocaust and the dangers of antisemitism. It is my understanding that the sector has also reached out to you requesting an AQ to address these serious concerns.

The involvement of trusted expert stakeholders in Holocaust education and antisemitism is particularly important in a sensitive context such as this.

As a result, I am writing to direct the College to propose amendments to Ontario Regulation 176/10 (Teachers' Qualifications) by adding an Additional Qualification (AQ) course on Antisemitism and the Holocaust and that the OCT co-develop this AQ with Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies (FSWC).

This does not of course preclude the OCT's long-standing practice of broad sector engagement in developing these learning tools.

This new AQ would raise awareness for teachers to have an understanding and respect of the issues faced in the Jewish community. Having the knowledge and understanding of Jewish history, including antisemitism and its implications on today's society, can be important so that they can notice, name and respond to antisemitic incidents in classrooms and schools.

The Ministry is committed to keeping students safe and building a high-quality education system where all students can succeed. We believe this new AQ will provide the system with a valuable resource to help make this happen.

We look forward to receiving the College Council's request to amend the Teachers' Qualifications regulation.

Thank you again for your ongoing work and consideration of matters that support the teaching profession in the public interest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Lecce". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education