

**From:** [Independent Jewish Voices-Toronto & York Region](#)  
**To:** [councilmeeting](#)  
**Subject:** [External Sender] Pls Vote Against the Motion to Limit Protest with "Safety Zones"  
**Date:** May 21, 2024 10:29:37 PM

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Hello,

We are writing as Independent Jewish Voices Toronto-York Region Chapter to express our opposition to motion MM18.16 submitted by Councillors James Pasternak and Brad Bradford.

This motion is calling on the province to introduce legislation that will impose arbitrary limitations on a core democratic value for freedom of expression protected in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

When we initiated a campaign to invite other Torontonians to share their concerns about this motion, over 750 people responded within 30 hours.

We urge members of City Council to vote against this motion.

The proposal seeks to restrict Torontonians from giving voice to our issues through peaceful and legitimate protest and, if the motion were to pass without being referred to committee, it would mean that there was no real opportunity for public consultation. Such a process would further demonstrate that constituents are losing ways to communicate with the people, like City Councillors, who are supposed to represent us.

The motion seeks to ask the Government of Ontario to introduce legislation that restricts free expression and the right to protest near places of worship, faith-based schools, daycares, community centres, museums and other "institutions of a religious or cultural nature". Councillors should recognize that in many communities there is very little space left for people to legally protest if it cannot happen near any of the places listed in the motion.

It also does not take into account that sometimes these institutions take action that makes them legitimate focal points for protest. For example, Art Gallery of Ontario workers were recently on strike and other people joined them to demonstrate solidarity and protest for them to secure a fair contract. Should those actions not be allowed any more?

We all know how subjective it is to determine whether a protest is "peaceful". Often this is a seemingly arbitrary decision or one made to further a particular narrative. For example, despite months of protests against genocide where people have protested peacefully without incident (unless instigated by police or counter protestors) James Pasternak continues to refer to them as "hate rallies".

The summary provided in the motion attempts to connect hate crimes to recent Palestine solidarity protests but there is not evidence of this correlation. Councillor Pasternak mentions an increase in anti-Arab, anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian hate to portray this proposed limit on people's rights as good for everyone, but he himself continues to stir up anti-Palestinian hate with motions that he continues to introduce at City Hall.

Beliefs such as his call into question who will be determining who has the right to protest and who will be criminalized by the law this motion supports. Do not let it pass without hearing from your constituents and others through meaningful public consultations.

Experience teaches us that the legislation being called for with this motion will be used to target and criminalize racialized and equity seeking communities.

We are calling on City Councillors who value community engagement and Charter rights to freedom of expression to vote against this motion.

Thank you,

Independent Jewish Voices Toronto-York Region Chapter (and the over 750 people who sent letters agreeing with this position within 30 hours of it being shared.)