



מועצת רבנים מתקדמים של טורונטו ופרבריה

Statement from the Reform Rabbis of Greater Toronto To the City of Toronto Public Consultation Team Regarding Bubble Zones Proposal

The RRGT is in favor of a protective buffer zones or “bubble zones” around vulnerable institutions including places of worship. As the professional association representing Reform rabbis from across Toronto, we believe the proposed bylaw offers a balanced and reasonable solution to a growing problem: the intimidation and disruption of communities by demonstrations and protests. While the right to protest and freedom of speech is protected by our charter of rights, so too is the right to gather freely and without fear in religious community and the freedom of religion. When two charter rights are at odds, we believe that the City’s proposed approach should uphold freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, while protecting vulnerable institutions from targeted harassment. The solution would therefore be a bubble of 50 metres away from vulnerable institutions which appeases both rights.

Sadly, we have seen disruptive protests at churches, synagogues, gurdwaras, temples and mosques. We have seen them at hospitals and near schools. Across the city, faith leaders and community members are grappling with the consequences of increasingly visible and often hostile demonstrations. This has affected the emotional and spiritual atmosphere of our communal institutions, eroding the welcoming, open nature that is central to the values of the city of Toronto.

We appreciate and support the City of Toronto's effort to develop this bylaw in consultation with constitutional experts, legal advisors, community leaders, and public stakeholders. We are encouraged that the City is looking to other municipalities such as Brampton, Vaughan, and Calgary as examples of how to approach this issue responsibly. We recommend a minimum 50-metre buffer zone around places of worship to ensure meaningful separation between protesters and worshippers. We also encourage the City to accompany the bylaw with robust education and outreach to help the public understand its purpose and scope.

**Respectfully submitted by Rabbi Noam Katz
Chair, Reform Rabbis of Greater Toronto**