

# THE JEWISH STANDARD

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**INTRODUCING CHATEAU B'NAI BRITH. SEE PAGE 2 FOR MORE.**

# B'NAI BRITH - ADVOCATING FOR CANADIAN JEWRY

By MIKE COHEN

B'nai Brith Canada (www.bnaibrith.ca) is recognized as a vital voice in promoting Jewish unity and continuity, a staunch defender of the State of Israel and global Jewry, a tireless advocate on behalf of senior citizens and a leader in combatting anti-semitism and racism. The organization operates the country's only 24-Hour Anti-Hate Hotline combatting antisemitism and racism and annually produces The Audit of Antisemitic Incidents, recognized internationally as Canada's definitive report on anti-semitism. Unlike many other organizations, B'nai Brith Canada is completely self funded, relying entirely on the generosity of supporters to succeed. B'nai Brith has ties to all parts of Canadian society and is a champion of democracy and freedom for Canadians from coast to coast.

The country's oldest Jewish advocacy organiza-

tion, B'nai Brith Canada has roots going back to 1875. Decisions are made based on regular consultations with the community. Because of these close ties with the community, it is hard to find a single Jewish family in Canada that does not have a direct connection to the organization's historical legacy.

If you have been the victim of an anti-semitic incident, you are encouraged to submit a strictly confidential online report at [bnaibrith.ca/report](http://bnaibrith.ca/report) or to call the 24-hour anti-hate hotline at 1-800-892-2624.

## **B'nai Brith is active in Quebec and Montreal**

The Quebec Regional office staff of B'nai Brith Canada supports local, national and volunteer activities in the region, be they community service programs such as Chez Doris, Miriam Home, Senior Sunday Breakfasts, Chanukah Candle Lighting, the Shoah twin-

ning program, calls for donations, general inquiries from the community, meetings with local public officials, police and the Montreal hate crimes unit, plus provincial MNAs on important issues and bills that affect the community. The Region also participates in community events such as Yom Hashoah and Israel Independence Day and undertakes various outreach to other groups and synagogues while maintaining a high profile with the media by making them aware of anti-semitic incidents.

Much time is spent responding to the 24/7 Anti-Hate Hotline or calls that come directly in to their office both locally and nationally. Incidents are recorded for the vital Annual Audit of Anti-semitic Incidents and assisting when possible through the League for Human Rights, working with local volunteers lawyers and the National Director for

the League.

The B'nai Brith Canada Quebec Council is a non-official group composed of volunteers and committee chairs who meet monthly and ad-hoc in separate committee meetings on various projects to discuss and keep up to date with B'nai Brith's many projects. The key volunteers and committee chairs, working diligently with Director Harvey Levine and Administrator Janna Minikovich are: Jerry Tarasofsky, Ted Greenfield, Eric Bissell, Joanne Cutler, Terry Roth, Sharon Freedman, Allane Moghabi, Larry G. Rosenthal, Ronnie Roter, Aaron Remer and Neil Bernstein.

Audit of Anti-semitic events continues to be a major focus of the work B'nai Brith does in Quebec. It was more than two years ago that then Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre participated in a focus group on antisemitism, with The League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith, Canada's



TOP LEFT, B'NAI BRITH'S JANNA MINIKOVICH, HARVEY LEVINE, MOISE MOGHRABI AND TED GREENFIELD showcase the Audit at the Montreal press conference. On the right, Grammy Award winner Jennifer Gasoi is seen with organizers and participants of a recent event, Photos Mike Cohen.

most recent Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents events in his hands. Coderre, who was a huge supporter of the Jewish community during his four year term, threw out a trial balloon and began to discuss the possibility of establishing a new police unit dedicated to hate crimes and incidents motivated by hate. That prompted Moïse Moghrabi, the League's Quebec chair, to suggest that the mayor move forward with such an initiative and he did just that.

The unit was formally unveiled in May 2016 and is tasked with centralizing all information on both hate crimes and incidents motivated by hate. While the city's police force has documented and investigated hate crimes for years, the focus on incidents motivated by hate is unique. These incidents involve non-criminal acts that affect an individual or identifiable group's sense of security and are believed to be motivated by race, national or ethnic origin, language, skin colour, sex, religion, sexual orientation, age or disability.

At a Montreal press conference held recently to unveil the 2017 B'nai Brith Audit, Quebec Director Harvey Levine expressed his hope that more politicians will take a good long look at the documentation and take the results to heart. "We are still working with and meeting the Montreal Police on the unit which we still consider to be fledgling," said Levine. "We are very pleased with the progress. Members of this unit are going out to neighbourhood police stations and training officers on how to handle such incidents. Our audit does a lot of good. This is a prime example."

There were 474 acts of antisemitism in Quebec in 2017, 27 percent of the national total. Levine believes that there are countless incidents that are never

reported to B'nai Brith. He pointed to the strongly Hassidic community of Outremont, where intolerance has been running rampant for years.

"We need people there to report incidents to us more," he said. "Unfortunately such acts have become so prevalent that they often do not react." With a new Montreal mayor and administration, a provincial election set for October 1 and the recent June 18th federal by-election in Outremont, Moghrabi confirmed that copies of the audit will be used in meetings with politicians at all levels.

Quebec Liberal Premier Philippe Couillard, backed by D'Arcy McGee MNA David Birnbaum, has repeatedly reached out to the Jewish community. Last year he led an unprecedented mission to Israel. More recently he attended and spoke at the community-wide Yom Hashoah ceremony. He has proven to be a loyal friend of the community.

Levine said that a meeting will be sought with Coalition Avenir du Québec leader François Legault, whose poll numbers have been strong. B'nai Brith has never met with him before, so a copy of the audit will be headed his way. Amir Khadir, from the separatist Quebec Solidaire,

was cited in the audit claiming that members of the National Assembly are "completely controlled when it comes to the Palestine issue...by the Zionist lobby." For the complete audit, please visit [bnaibrith.ca/audit](http://bnaibrith.ca/audit)

**SUNDAY AFTER-NOON BRUNCHES** There are no shortage of events and activities organized by the Jewish community in Montreal. However, quite clearly, the B'nai Brith Community Volunteer Services (CVS) Committee has come up with a winning formula with its Music Brunch for Seniors. Joanne Cutler and Sharon Freedman are the organizers.

Joanne is one of B'nai Brith's invaluable community organizers. She comes from a family which has always believed in the importance of philanthropy. She and her charismatic husband Mirv Middling are ever so present at events around town, be it as musical performers or just doing good for others.

Joanne was thrilled to discuss her Music Brunch for Seniors, which clearly fills a void. So many seniors remain housebound barely getting out except to do groceries, attend doctor's appointments or do some banking. Social interaction is sorely missing. Joanne recognized this. That is why she connected with The

Adath and Rabbi Michael Whitman last fall to see if something could be done to make the lives of seniors more enjoyable.

For the March event, Joanne went out and hired a "star" to perform in 2014 Grammy Award winner and two-time JUNO nominated singer/songwriter Jennifer Gasoi. This talented Jewish singer actually moved from Vancouver to Montreal in 2002. Clearly she was a draw and the more than 100 seniors who attended loved her performance. The event started with a buffet brunch catered by Moshe Engler, who handles the same duties at B'nai Brith House. People chose tables to sit at and for the next three hours they took in the show. Many got up to dance and sing along with Gasoi. Joanne and Merv led by example on the dance floor and before long there was a hora, which included the likes of B'nai Brith legendary leader Ted Greenfield. He had a gigantic smile on his face. In June, it was Joanne's band Que Sera which performed.

"B'nai Brith, over our long history, has been a volunteer driven organization," says Greenfield. "In the USA, B'nai Brith is the largest operator of not for profit affordable housing projects for seniors. In Canada we have emulated this and in Montreal, B'nai Brith House, now almost 12 years in operation, is considered a model of how the over 65, low income, autonomous seniors of our community should be afforded a life style that is wholesome and meaningful."

"In dealing with this community, we are quite aware of the isolation many of them experience and, while there are various institutions offering services to seniors, some are not affordable to many and there seemed to be a vacuum of service on Sundays. One of the loyal volunteers,

*(Please turn to page 14)*



*Grassroots Human Rights  
Advocacy and a Lifeline for  
our Community*

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Sharon Freedman, a retired social worker, has been advocating for a Sunday program for some time now and, Joanne Cutler, Sharon and a group of our volunteers on Joanne's committee, decided to make this happen. We have seen many of the same faces at both and many more at the second. I attended both of these brunches and they gave me great satisfaction at witnessing the seniors eating and enjoying the company and the musical entertainment and singing along and dancing - and to feel the sense of satisfaction on the part of the volunteers present."

The next two brunches are scheduled for Sunday, August 5 and Sunday October 14. Ad-

## ADVOCATING FOR CANADIAN JEWRY

*(Continued from page 5)*

**Have you experienced antisemitism, racism or discrimination?**

*We can help.*

**24/7 Anti-Hate Hotline  
1-800-892-BNAI (2624)**



mission is \$10 in advance or at the door. The Adath is located at 223 Harrow Road in Hampstead. "The goal is to hold them once a month in the near future," Joanne pledged. "The only thing holding them back is funding!"

It is with this in mind that Joanne wants to get the word out to potential sponsors and donors "to help us establish this monthly goal and keep the music flowing!"

We recommend that readers log on to the B'nai Brith Canada website ([www.bnaibrith.ca](http://www.bnaibrith.ca)) daily for there will always be something new and valuable posted. Indeed, every conceivable aspect of Jewish life can be seen in the work B'nai Brith performs on a daily basis.



Mr. Guy Ouellette

Député de / M.N.A. for Chomedey

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Chair of the Committee on Planning and the Public Domain

### Hôtel du Parlement

1045, rue des Parlementaires

Bureau RC.93

Québec (Québec) G1A 1A4

Tél. : 418 644-4050 | Téléc. : 418 646-7385

### Bureau de circonscription

4599, boul. Samson, bureau 201

Laval (Québec) H7W 2H2

Tél: 450 686-0166 | Téléc. : 450 686-7153

[gouellette-chom@assnat.qc.ca](mailto:gouellette-chom@assnat.qc.ca)



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