

## Statement from Durham Human Rights Commission

Adopted on 4/5/24

We, members of Durham's Human Rights Commission, are concerned that we were not consulted prior to the Durham's Town Council vote to pass a ceasefire resolution (Resolution #2024-10) on March 4, 2024, regarding the war in Gaza and Israel. Although the Human Rights Commission was cited in the "Whereas" section of the resolution, we were not involved in either the decision to pass a resolution or the content of the one that was passed.

Normal Town Council practice is to refer issues to appropriate committees/commissions prior to acting. Skipping that step undermined the value of the Council's action. Despite Councilor Friedman mentioning usual practice, the Council, prompted by requests from members of public in attendance at a February 19, 2024 Town Council meeting, a sense of urgency, and facing fixed meeting dates, decided to move ahead. We feel that acting in haste in this situation was not necessary and resulted in poor process and untoward consequences.

One of the charges of Durham's Human Rights Commission (HRC) is to counter prejudice of any kind. We are to encourage town employees and volunteers, as well as private persons and groups, to promote and provide equal opportunity for and *goodwill towards all people*.

We are deeply concerned about the growing discord caused by the ongoing war in Gaza and Israel and the rising rates of antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents and sentiments. Durham is not immune from these actions and attitudes. We call on the Town of Durham to combat these trends and support all our residents. We believe that building skills in deep listening, dialogue, and cultivating the ability to hold multiple perspectives are fundamental to strengthening communities. Understanding and empathy are essential for reconciliation and healing, and ultimately, for finding ways of coexisting in peace. We call on Durham's town government, organizations, and citizens to collaborate in developing opportunities and resources to support Durham residents in achieving the greater mutual understanding necessary for goodwill towards all who call Durham home.

Approved by a vote of 5-0.