



December 20, 2022

Dear Governors,

Recent op-eds in the local media about antisemitism at the University of Toronto are deeply troubling to all of us. These pieces refer to an article by Dr. Ayelet Kuper – the Temerty Faculty of Medicine’s former Senior Advisor on Antisemitism and a member of the University’s Antisemitism Working Group – published in the Canadian Medical Education Journal earlier this month. Dr. Kuper described her personal experiences of antisemitism at U of T and in our partner hospitals, experiences that were real and repugnant.

I and my predecessors in the President’s Office have consistently condemned antisemitism in the strongest possible terms and I do so again now. As I noted in my [statement to the Governing Council](#) on December 15, 2022, antisemitism is a pernicious and despicable form of racism, and we must do everything we can to combat and eradicate it. Demeaning, hateful language and sickening, ancient stereotypes and tropes have no place on our campuses or in our affiliated hospitals. The University of Toronto community cannot and will not tolerate such behaviour. On this note, I would direct Governors to an op-ed I will be publishing in tomorrow’s Globe and Mail.

Let me assure Governors and the entire University community that we are firmly committed to fighting the scourge of antisemitism on our campuses and beyond. I also acknowledge that more work needs to be done before we succeed.

Antisemitism subverts and demeans our entire community, not just those who are targeted. The University of Toronto must respond as a community. No statement from the President, no apology from a Faculty, no guideline or training program will eradicate antisemitism or any other kind of racism. They are critically important tools, yes, and we will continue to raise awareness and pursue every measure available. But ultimately, progress will come from the actions of our community together – from education, solidarity, speaking out, challenging casual discrimination, standing with our Jewish friends and colleagues. I call on *all* members of our community to unite in the battle against antisemitism and all other forms of racism and exclusion. This is how we will succeed. Not just at the University of Toronto, but across Canada and everywhere that is blighted by racism.

The media reports cited above made little or no mention of the steps we have already taken to address antisemitism and other forms of racism. Because antisemitism is insidious, like other forms of racism, addressing it will take time, persistence and patience.

We are committed to taking the time needed to address every aspect of racism. And we are making progress. Here is a partial list of steps we have taken and are taking:

- The University convened a [Presidential, Provostial, and Vice-Presidential Working Group on Antisemitism](#), chaired by Professor Arthur Ripstein (Faculty of Law and Department of Philosophy), and including other leading faculty members and senior administrators.
- The University has [committed](#) to implementing all [eight recommendations](#) put forward by the Working Group and we have made significant progress.
- The Institutional Equity Office (IEO) has redefined its mandate and scope explicitly to include antisemitism.
- The Vice-President, People Strategy, Equity & Culture and the Executive Director, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, represented U of T, one of two Canadian universities, at the University Summit on Campus Antisemitism hosted by Hillel International and other key partners, in New York, April 2022.
- The IEO and members from Hillel at U of T meet regularly to increase opportunities for partnership, understanding, and relationship building.
- Clearer language on accommodations is now updated in the Division of People Strategy, Equity & Culture's [Inclusive Employer Guides](#) for all informational guides about religious observances.
- The Vice-President, People Strategy, Equity & Culture reinforced the university's duty to accommodate and raised awareness on the steps to report hate-related vandalism in the annual [supporting an inclusive and welcoming community](#) message to all employees.
- The Antiracism and Cultural Diversity Office (ARCDO) continues to engage education programming focused on understanding and addressing antisemitism, which included:
 - Speaker Series event held on January 31, 2022, 'Antisemitism: Here and Now', with featured speaker - Deborah E. Lipstadt, Dorot Professor of Holocaust Studies, Emory University
 - Workshop on 'Understanding and Addressing Antisemitism' on March 22, 2022, facilitated by Dr. Shari Golberg.
 - Workshop on 'A Shape-Shifting Hatred: Understanding and Addressing Antisemitism', scheduled for March 14, 2023
 - Restore - *Restorative Circle for Jewish Community*, scheduled for January 23, 2023
- Recruitment for the position of Consultant, Faith and Antiracism, reporting to the Executive Director, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion will commence soon.
- Education programming is also taking place within the faculties across the University.

Beyond these actions at the institutional level, the Temerty Faculty of Medicine has gone further still – further than any medical school in the country – to address the challenge of antisemitism. Among other initiatives, they have incorporated Holocaust and antisemitism

education in their curriculum for medical students. They have also owned up to past injustices, [formally apologizing](#) for historical Jewish quotas for medical students and hospital trainees and they will continue to support further research on antisemitism in healthcare. They are providing faculty mentors for diverse students, including Jewish learners. Their Centre for Faculty Development will expand training on antisemitism and antiracism for their instructors. And together with our network of affiliated hospitals, they are planning a new lecture series on antiracism and religious intolerance, and will form an antiracism working group on incident reporting. These commitments speak to their conviction in addressing this problem at its root cause.

At the same time, universities must also continue to be places where critical debate about contentious issues can take place. This includes both the right to call out antisemitism and the right to criticize the actions of the State of Israel. It is for this reason that our working group on antisemitism, after months of deliberation, recommended against adopting the working definition of antisemitism proposed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

Let me conclude by saying unequivocally that we stand with our Jewish community. We will ensure you are supported, heard, and defended. We are listening to your experiences, and we will fight antisemitism together wherever it appears.

Sadly, antisemitism is clearly on the rise in Canada and in other countries. We must not be lax on our campuses. We will commit to accelerating our progress and adding support capacity at U of T. We will not shrink from our goal of being the most welcoming, diverse, inclusive and excellent academic community in the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Meric S. Gertler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Meric S. Gertler
President