

East End Madrassah loses Toronto school permit after anti-Semitic postings on website

May 17 2012

A local Islamic school cannot use a Scarborough public school for weekend classes until police have wrapped up their investigation into anti-Jewish teachings, Toronto's public board has decided.

The controversy over [East End Madrassah's](#) curriculum has also prompted the board to promise a review of its permit process "in the very near future" and make the rules clear to groups that rent out space, said Jim Spyropoulos, co-ordinating superintendent of inclusive schools.

York Region police's hate crimes unit is still investigating the online material — which came to light early last week — that called ancient Jews "treacherous" and "crafty" and accused them of "conspiring to kill the Prophet Muhammad."

The madrassah immediately pulled the documents and [issued an apology](#).

Spyropoulos said the [Toronto District School Board](#) had not been able to reach the madrassah's administrators until this Tuesday.

"What we said was, we needed to be satisfied with the outcome of the investigation and that they were in compliance with our policies and procedures" before they can use board property, he added.

The board has asked for a meeting "to have a deeper discussion" around the issue "so we can have a clear understanding of their programming and curriculum, and how and why some of the statements that appeared on their website were there."

The East End Madrassah rents space from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. each Sunday at [David and Mary Thomson Collegiate](#), on Lawrence Ave. E. near Brimley Rd. It was not booked to use the school again until May 27, June 3, and June 10.

Avi Benlolo of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, who alerted police to the offensive material, was pleased with the board's move but thinks the permit should have been immediately revoked. He also called on school boards to "put a plan in place to ensure no group is ever targeted as the Jewish community has been."

That sentiment was echoed by PC deputy education critic Rob Milligan.

"I think all boards should be a little more proactive in screening any individual or groups or organizations that are potentially renting or leasing space," said the MPP for Northumberland-Quinte West.

David Spiro of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs said the madrassah should not be allowed back in a public school regardless.

The board issues about 20,000 permits a year, with some 570 going to religious groups. It has the right to cancel a permit at any time.

York police are investigating because while the madrassah rents the space, the program is actually run by the [Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaat](#) of Thornhill.

Neither the madrassah nor the Thornhill mosque have responded to the Star's requests for interviews.