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The Standing Up Against Anti-Semitism in Ontario Act will be introduced at Queen's Park Thursday. It is designed to counter the anti-Semitic economic campaign against Israel known as BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) and address the growing anti-Jewish hatred in the province that is fuelled by the movement. It will provide the legislative muscle to reinforce Ontario's commitment to its Jewish community and our friendship with Israel - a friendship solidified by Premier Kathleen Wynne's first mission to Israel and the principled stand she took in declaring this week that, "The BDS position is certainly not mine, nor is it that of our government, and I entirely oppose the movement. In fact, I stand firmly against any position that promotes or encourages anti-Semitism in any way."

For the Jewish community, the BDS campaign is a reminder of the pre-Holocaust era, when the Nazis first enacted boycotts against Jewish businesses. In fact, businesses are often targeted right here in Ontario because they are owned by Jewish citizens or are trading with Israel.

Anti-Semitism is one of the oldest forms of hatred. Throughout time, Jewish communities have been decimated through inquisitions, crusades, pogroms and finally the Holocaust - all in the name of righteousness. There was always some good reason provided to justify the decision to oppress, isolate, marginalize, shame and murder Jews. Tellingly, almost every single sequence of anti-Semitism began with boycotts, separation, dehumanization and "divestment" of Jews.

This is exactly what is happening today. And this is why governments must respond.

To date, 16 U.S. states as well as the U.S. Congress and the Canadian House of Commons have enacted legislative initiatives in response to this form of anti-Semitism. Economic, cultural and academic anti-Semitism are forms of discrimination and have been defined as such by Canada (the Ottawa Protocol on Combating Anti-Semitism, 2011), the European Union and the U.S. State Department. A motion to condemn BDS was also passed this year by the government of Canada and the federal Conservative party.

The Standing Up Against Anti-Semitism in Ontario Act is the first of its kind in Canada. It prohibits the government from entering into contracts with businesses that support or participate in BDS; provincial pension funds will now divest themselves of investments in businesses that boycott Israel. Additionally, as BDS campaigns are so prevalent on university campuses, the legislation prohibits college and university administrations from supporting or participating in the BDS movement. In other words, the act puts the weight of the government behind tolerance, and against hatred and intimidation.

Significantly, the act does not restrict free speech in any way. However, those who choose to discriminate against the Jewish people by refusing to do business with Israel or a Jewish-owned business will find that Ontario will not conduct business with them. Our province will not support intolerance and hate.

The BDS Campaign is an anti-peace movement that is impacting Palestinian workers as much as Israelis, and is furthering the wedge between the two communities. The shutdown of production plants like Soda Stream due to pressure from BDS campaigns has resulted in the loss of employment for many Palestinians who were working alongside Israelis.

One of the most frequent comments voiced by Holocaust survivors is their anguish so few people spoke out against the Nazis' marginalization of the Jews in the years before the Holocaust happened. People went along to get along, even when they knew it was wrong. Today, we have the lessons of history to learn from and no excuse for inaction. No matter our political stripes, we should all stand up and speak out against anti-Semitism.

Just as we frown today on those who refused to speak out in the past, one day our actions will also be judged by those who come after us. Therefore, let our legacy be our commitment to speak out against hate and intolerance. Let us be the first generation that treats not only our Jewish community but all our diverse communities with respect, compassion and friendship.

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