



BY E-MAIL

January 3, 2024

Cantor Cheryl Wunch
Congregation Shir Libeynu
c/o 750 Spadina Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2J2

Dear Cantor Wunch,

In a few short months we will again celebrate May as Canadian Jewish Heritage Month. In 2018 Parliament unanimously passed a bill declaring every May as Canadian Jewish Heritage Month to mark the significant contributions that Jews have made to Canada's wellbeing and success.

With the world still focussed on the efforts to free all the hostages taken by Hamas and with Israel committed to rooting out terrorism, it is understandably difficult to concentrate on ensuring a robust and successful Jewish Heritage Month, 2024.

But in many ways, it is more important than ever that we do so. It will be an affirmation of Jewish history in Canada and a means that Jews can show pride in both Canada and Israel.

All of us hope that the Hamas terrorists will be defeated in the coming weeks and no longer play a role in destabilizing the Middle East. We have work ahead of us to confront the wave of antisemitism that Canada has seen over the past two months provoked by small but vocal groups glorifying terror and promoting Hamas.

But we also have work to do to reaffirm to our fellow Canadians that Israel and Canada share common values and that we must as a nation continue to Stand with Israel.

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Jewish Heritage Month can aid in that regard. I write to your congregation today to launch a consultation as to what you and your clientele would like to see as part of our efforts to promote the month. Please feel free to share this information with those in your milieu.

Over the past two years, B'nai Brith's League for Human Rights has enjoyed enormous success in alerting the public to what was only a few years ago a rather anonymous month.

We have, for example, convinced nearly a hundred municipalities and school boards across Canada to formally recognize the month.

We have obtained statements from big city Mayors and several Premiers marking the month. The question now is where should we go from here ? How do we prod members of the Jewish community to more actively celebrate the heritage month ? How do we invite our friends from outside the Jewish community to more actively take part in the month ?

As I write, there are no budgets specifically allocated to Jewish Heritage Month which evidently poses a challenge. I invite readers of this letter to share any ideas they may have to help raise the profile of the month further.

Please feel free to share your thoughts with me by mid-January. I will at that time circulate another update. I thank you for taking the time to reflect on how we can help grow Canadian Jewish Heritage Month.

Yours truly,



Marvin Rotrand
National Director - League for Human Rights
B'nai Brith Canada

