

Statement

Protecting Vaughan's places of worship, schools, childcare facilities and our hospital

Mayor Del Duca seeks to safeguard vulnerable social infrastructure in Vaughan

VAUGHAN, ON (March 18, 2024) – Mayor Steven Del Duca issued the following statement on his intention to bring forward a Members Resolution to protect Vaughan's places of worship, schools, child care facilities and its hospital from demonstrations and protests that incite hatred, intolerance and violence, and seek to intimidate residents:

"Protecting vulnerable social infrastructure in Vaughan is critically-important so that our residents are safe, and feel safe, going to their place of worship, their school, their childcare centre, or to our hospital. I will do everything in my power to ensure that this happens."

"Today, I am announcing that I will be bringing forward a Member's Resolution to Vaughan City Council which, if passed, would direct City staff to prepare a bylaw that prohibits demonstrations of a nature that are intended to intimidate, incite hatred, violence or discrimination within 100 metres of a religious institution, schools, childcare centre, hospital, congregate care settings or other vulnerable social infrastructure. This Resolution would also direct staff to draft the bylaw so that any person who violates this condition be fined the maximum amount permissible, not to exceed \$100,000."

"The right to peaceful protest is a fundamental freedom afforded to all Canadians. However, this right is not without limits. Everyone, regardless of their faith or background, has a right to feel safe, especially in vulnerable areas of our community, where kids go to learn, where people go to access vital healthcare, where families go for childcare services, and where our residents go to worship.

"Let me be clear: there is no tolerance for hate in Vaughan.

"Acts of intimidation, such as the antisemitic vandalism at Chabad House of Maple and the bomb threat at the Jaffari Community Centre and Mosque, as well as the large-scale protests that occurred in Thornhill near synagogues, schools and child care facilities are all examples of behaviour that is deeply disturbing to our residents. Each represents a wake-up call for leaders and requires a call-to-action.

"There have been previous efforts made to protect places of worship. Specifically, this includes Schedule 9, (the "Safe Zones Around Religious Institutions Act, 2022") of Bill 86, *Our London Family Act (Working Together to Combat Islamophobia and Hatred 2022)*, which had proposed a \$25,000 fine being imposed on any person who performed an act of intimidation or disturbance, distributed hate propaganda or uttered

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threats within 50 metres of a place of worship. I supported this legislation when it was introduced in 2022, and I call on the provincial government to move forward urgently with updated and strengthened measures in this regard.

“I am confident that by working with all levels of government and taking the necessary actions, we can continue to build a pluralistic, tolerant, diverse and inclusive community – where all people are welcome to create better, more promising lives for themselves and their families.”

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ABOUT VAUGHAN: The City of Vaughan is one of Canada’s fastest growing cities with a population of more than 344,412. Incorporated in 1991, Vaughan includes the communities of Concord, Kleinburg, Maple, Thornhill and Woodbridge. This culturally diverse municipality is located in the heart of York Region and the Greater Toronto Area.

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