*Convened by the Jewish Faculty Network and Independent Jewish Voices Canada, the Academic Hasbara Audit (A-HA) Committee is the first initiative dedicated to systematically identifying and conducting post-publication reviews of research that appears to deploy university platforms, peer-reviewed venues, or government commissions to shield Israel from criticism by labeling political dissent as "antisemitic." Studies are selected for audit when they exhibit severe methodological deficiencies, such as unrepresentative sampling or circular definitions, and are used in media or policy spheres to restrict protected speech or advance partisan policy agendas in relation to Israel.*

*Each audit pairs independent scholarly evaluation of a work's empirical rigour with an examination of its media and policy uptake and, where relevant, public advocacy by the authors. By assessing these dimensions independently, A-HA documents how flawed scholarship functions in practice without presuming premeditated coordination. Where research fails baseline evidentiary standards, A-HA advocates for scholarly accountability, policy reassessment, and formal editorial remedies, including corrections, expressions of concern, or retractions.*

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: R. Brym *A Survey on Antisemitism in Ontario's K–12 Schools*, 2025**

**Overview**

The 2025 journal article by University of Toronto professor emeritus Robert Brym on antisemitism in K-12 schools exemplifies the use of academic research to advance policy arguments that shield Israel from criticism. In addition to its timing and topic, its connection to government policy parallels recent ideologically-driven governmental reports on antisemitism in post-secondary institutions in Canada (Campus Antisemitism and Student Experiences, CASE)[1] and in the UK (Independent review – antisemitism in schools and colleges in England).[2] All three documents share similarities:

- All three reports were explicitly commissioned by state bodies in response to the post-Oct 7 social fallout in Canada and the UK, specifically related to students' and educators' implication in anti-genocide campaigns.
- The methodology of each report relies on self-selected samples recruited through targeted advocacy networks, resulting in data that validates subjective emotional distress without a parallel objective evaluation of the cited situations.
- All three critique existing institutional anti-discrimination frameworks, (EDI in Canada and the generalized "equalities and anti-racism" structure in the UK) as incapable of addressing antisemitism in schools. They weaponize this critique to support their recommendations for exceptional, standalone policies on antisemitism and to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism. In effect, these reports call for shifting the focus of institutional policing away from tangible actions toward the regulation of political speech, cultural symbols, and dissent against Israel.

[1] J. Jedwab, P. Holley, "Campus Antisemitism and Student Experiences", Canadian Heritage, Gov. Canada, Aug. 2026 (https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/canada-holocaust/antisemitism/campus-antisemitism-student-experiences.html).

[2] D. Bell, "Independent review–antisemitism in schools and colleges in England", Dept. Edu., UK, Oct. 2026 (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6ad78a9f5eadc3d6e8a10839/Independent_review_antisemitism_in_schools_and_colleges_in_england.pdf).

In consideration also of Robert Brym's direct involvement with the CASE study as a member of its Advisory Board, the A-HA Editorial Board chose his K-12 study[3] as the first subject of its audit. The primary reviews from this audit are appended to this executive summary.

In this executive summary we briefly highlight some of the findings of the review panel's reports which largely focus on the academic quality, methodology and conclusions of Brym's report. The reader is recommended to consult the primary reports directly to read the academic reviewers' assessments in their own words. This summary also goes further in two aspects: to evaluate any evidence of the author's personal opinions expressed outside of the report which may betray personal bias, and to note its social penetration through media and governmental policy.

## I. Methodological rigour and ideological framing in the published texts

A core focus of this audit is evaluating baseline scholarly rigour, as weak methodology, whether deliberate or inadvertent, creates analytical gaps that allow research to be misused for ideological ends. In Brym's study, severe methodological deficiencies and undisclosed institutional sponsorship with potential conflicts of interest undermine its empirical validity. By relying on a circular definition that treats unverified "perceived antisemitic incidents by proxy reporters" as objective fact, and drawing from a non-probability sample recruited through synagogues and organizations engaged in pro-Israel public advocacy, the study fails to distinguish between antisemitic and non-antisemitic events or protected political speech. Furthermore, ambiguous wording appears to be deployed to mask the likelihood that not all survey-reported incidents were formally brought to school officials, creating an impression that overstates the negligence by school authorities. Ironically, the author's own home department teaches undergraduate students to reject the exact methodological shortcuts deployed in this report.

These analytical gaps enable the report to shift from objective scientific inquiry toward ideological advocacy by consistently framing political dissent and anti-racism initiatives as anti-Jewish hate. Beyond faulting the Toronto District School Board for not adopting the IHRA definition, the report presents Zionism and the centrality of Israel to Jewish identity without qualification, labels Palestinian speakers and critiques of settler colonialism as inherently antisemitic, and attacks school Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies while omitting the political context of Israel's actions in Gaza.

Based on the critical flaws in the research study the following is recommended:

- The report should be removed from Government of Canada websites, and all subsequent government and schoolboard documents that reference it should be reassessed.

[3] Two versions of this 2025 study exist: The government study "Antisemitism in Ontario's K-12 Schools" and the journal article R. Brym, "A Survey on Antisemitism in Ontario's K-12 Schools", Canadian Jewish Studies, 2025, 41, https://cjs.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cjs/article/view/40434/36683

- Although the journal *Canadian Jewish Studies* that houses a second version of this work does not appear to have an explicit policy addressing severe methodological deficiencies, established editorial practice recognizes that unreliable findings due to critical methodological shortcomings may justify post-publication correction, an expression of concern, or retraction. In light of the concerns identified regarding methodological transparency, sampling limitations, reproducibility, and evidentiary support for conclusions, a retraction is a justified outcome. At a minimum, the article should be accompanied by an explanatory notice describing these concerns and descriptions of editorial actions taken.

## II. Personal demonstrations of bias outside the study

Brym demonstrates his commitment to promoting unsubstantiated narratives discussed above in the service of affecting public policy though his interactions with the media. For example, in his July 2025 interview with The Canadian Jewish News, Brym claimed that his non-probability study moves beyond anecdotal accounts by providing "systematic evidence collected in an objective manner demonstrating the existence of widespread antisemitism, particularly in the English public school system," adding that he hoped it would "reinforce the Ontario government's resolve to act decisively on the issue".[4]

Furthermore, his public commentary reveals an explicit ideological stance that undermines his posture as a neutral researcher. In 2026 National Post opinion pieces, Brym categorically declared that "anti-Zionism is antisemitic", dismissed anti-Zionist Jewish scholars as "misguided at best, antisemitic at worst",[5] and accused progressive Jewish advocates of "gaslighting Canadians" for distinguishing between anti-Israel protests and anti-Jewish hate.[6]

## III. Social penetration through media and government policy

The public and policy uptake of Brym's flawed datasets represents a critical dimension of academic hasbara. *A Survey on Antisemitism in Ontario K-12 Schools* achieved rapid, deep penetration into Canadian media and policy spheres immediately following its release. The manuscript appeared in a dedicated journal volume on July 14, 2025, transitioned into an official federal report on July 15, and was amplified via *The Canadian Jewish News* reporter Mitchell Consky and the Canadian Press wire by July 16 ("New survey shows alarming rise in antisemitism, Nazi rhetoric in Ontario schools"). This immediate visibility allowed B'nai Brith to instantly leverage Brym's metrics on July 15 to demand provincial

[4] *The Canadian Jewish News*, "New survey shows alarming rise in antisemitism, Nazi rhetoric in Ontario schools," July 16, 2025. thecjn.ca

[5] Robert Brym, "Yes, anti-Zionism is antisemitic," *National Post*, August 26, 2026. https://nationalpost.com/opinion/robert-brym-yes-anti-zionism-is-antisemitic/

[6] Robert Brym, "Avi Lewis and Independent Jewish Voices are gaslighting Canadians about antisemitism," *National Post*, January 5, 2026. https://nationalpost.com/opinion/avi-lewis-and-independent-jewish-voices-are-gaslighting-canadians-about-antisemitism/

adoption of its *Policy for Combating Antisemitism in Schools (PCAS)* framework. This momentum was sustained less than a month later when the Jewish Educators and Families Association of Canada (JEFA) launched its August 11, 2025 K–12 education report (building on themes from its earlier 2024 submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights).[7] According to reporting by The Canadian Jewish News (again via Consky) and the Canadian Press, the report systematically conflated Palestinian liberation in public classrooms with antisemitism, and went further to attack Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its Ontario adaptation, Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP), as frameworks that "decide who gets empathy, who gets resources and who is branded as an oppressor," thereby erasing Jewish indigeneity and minimizing antisemitism. On the same day, this media loop was closed by the National Post. For example, the Post's article "'No more TikTok teaching': Jewish advocacy group calls for Ontario classrooms to be free of identity politics" built from Brym's survey to uncritically broadcast JEFA's complaint that "Ontario's education system has lost its morals and its academic purpose."

## IV. Conclusion

Taken together, the severe methodological shortcuts within the manuscript, the author's overt ideological advocacy in public forums, and the synchronized media and lobbying blitz surrounding its release demonstrate that *A Survey on Antisemitism in Ontario's K–12 Schools* clearly exemplifies academic hasbara. Rather than advancing an objective, empirically grounded understanding of student experiences, the study leverages the authority of university scholarship and federal sponsorship to validate unverified perceptions and shield Israel from classroom criticism. Ultimately, the A-HA Editorial Board concludes that this work functions not as reliable social science, but as a political instrument deployed to dismantle anti-racism pedagogy and restrict protected political speech in Canadian public education.

[7] Live press conference for the release of our report on education reform; "End the Crisis – A Plan for Equal Rights and Real Learning" https://www.instagram.com/reel/DNOBkQWg2gW/. The written report is no longer available on the JEFA website.