

Mayor and Council Members,

I am writing today in support of the proposed bylaw to protect vulnerable spaces in our community.

Places of worship, hospitals, schools, and community centres are more than just buildings they are the only places where they feel safe, supported, and accepted.

I speak to you not just as a citizen, but as someone who has seen firsthand the psychological damage that can result when these spaces are left unprotected, such as at our house of worship Shaarei-Beth El Synagogue at 186 Morrison Road where for 9 long months a protestor walked up and down outside during peaceful prayer service, holding a sign filled with hateful rhetoric. The message was clear to our members— we were being watched, targeted, and made to feel unwelcome in our own sanctuary. Their aim was to cause distress and disrupt. The psychological impact was real and lasting — especially for children, elderly members, and Holocaust survivors in our congregation who were subjected to this targeted abuse for months on end. This bylaw will help by creating a clear, reasonable buffer between vulnerable spaces and those who would deliberately disrupt or distress the people within them.

My only recommendation would be that 20 metres is not enough, it should be at least 100 metres, and I would prefer 500 metres.

Moreover I believe the town is recommending this law be extended across the province of Ontario and indeed throughout Canada. I commend Oakville for taking this stand and support that recommendation.

All communities should be allowed to gather safely in peace.

I urge you to adopt this bylaw — not to favor one group over another, but to uphold the dignity and safety of all. This is not about silencing voices, nor is it about choosing sides. It's about the right of every person in our community to feel safe. Thank you for all the hard work that went into creating the draft bylaw, for your leadership, and for voting to adopt it, to deliver a vibrant and livable community for all people in Oakville.

Stephen Wise

