

The Hon. Rob Oliphant, P.C., M.P.

Don Valley West



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MESSAGE FROM ROB

These past weeks have been extremely difficult for everyone, but especially for members of the Jewish and Muslim communities in Don Valley West. The Middle East crisis has left many people on edge wondering about family members still in the region, worrying about the people taken hostage by Hamas, concerned about family members in Gaza and the increasing public health and humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza. Equally rising incidents of Antisemitism and Islamophobia are extremely concerning and need to be addressed by all of us.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I read daily briefings and engage with members of the Liberal Caucus and Opposition members on a daily basis. As a government we continue to condemn the horrendous attack on Israel and Israelis by the terrorist group Hamas. We also recognize the right of Israel to defend itself within the bounds of international law and international humanitarian law.

What I am working on locally

Last weekend, I met with leaders of the Muslim community in Don Valley West and am planning a similar meeting with members of the Jewish community in the days to come.

I was expecting anger and hostility and, while there was some of that, there was mostly sadness and a sense of helplessness. One person told me that his young daughter no longer wants to wear her hijab to school because she is afraid of being bullied. Residents are fearful of attending daily prayers or of shopping in Muslim owned businesses.

Remarkably, the people in attendance were still hopeful about a two-state solution, for the release of hostages, and for more humanitarian aid flowing into Gaza.

In a pluralistic society like Canada, we should expect vigorous debate on serious issues but we should never tolerate debate descending into vitriol, discrimination and violence. This week, Minister Joly delivered remarks to the Empire Club. Below is an excerpt of those remarks. You can watch or listen to the remarks [here](#).

On Sunday, I delivered a sermon at Leaside United Church, outlining some of my thoughts on the complex history of this problem and a hope that we, as Canadians, can play a vital role in a future of peace with justice for both Israeli and Palestinian people. You can watch or listen to my sermon [here](#).

Is this the time to call for a Ceasefire?

Many people have emailed me and called my office asking that our government pressure Israel into accepting a ceasefire. Given that Prime Minister Netanyahu has dismissed all calls for a ceasefire, I do not think any pressure from Canada will cause him to step back from that decision. Moreover, I cannot have any faith that Hamas would honour an agreement for a ceasefire. As a practical but temporary solution, we have called for humanitarian pauses so that foreign nationals and injured Palestinians can leave Gaza and vital humanitarian aid can be brought in.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Trudeau said that “the price of justice cannot be the continued suffering of all Palestinian civilians.” I agree. With Israel’s airstrikes of the Jabalya refugee camp, previous airstrikes in south Gaza, and previous airstrikes in residential areas of Gaza, I am increasingly concerned about the price that civilians are paying in this conflict. International law must be obeyed and future repercussions on Israel and Hamas will be the work of international bodies, including the International Criminal Court. This cannot be decided today, but in the meantime, fighting must stop to allow for aid to be given to people in Gaza.

Currently, we are focusing on:

- **The immediate release of hostages held by Hamas**
- **Getting humanitarian aid, including food, water, medicine and fuel to Gaza**
- **Making sure that Canadian-Palestinians have safe passage from Gaza to return to Canada**

But we need to keep working towards a better future

For the medium to longer-term, I believe that Canada has a role to play in the establishment of a permanent two state solution where Gazans have a responsible, reasonable government, working with the Palestinian Authority for the betterment of all Palestinians. That government cannot be Hamas. The international community should invest in this new state. Canada should be engaged helping them build a safe, prosperous and secure Palestinian state, living in peace and security with Israel. I remain convinced that Israel’s security is bound to a functioning, safe and responsible Palestinian state. And that the only truly permanent solution to terrorist activity is hope. Not war.

Islamophobia and Antisemitism are always unacceptable

Some people in Don Valley West and across Canada have responded to this crisis based on misinformation and disinformation. Inaccurate or biased reports only lead to more misunderstanding, scapegoating and violence in our communities.

I have seen troubling effects of this war in the vile and hurtful expressions of Islamophobia and Antisemitism, not just in Don Valley West but globally. We are better than this. We should never attack each other, our places of worship, places of business or places of learning with such hateful words and actions.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with your thoughts, concerns and ideas about this conflict or about addressing its echoes in our own country. Canadians need to help and hold each other regardless of religion or belief. Canada has been a model for generosity and tolerance for the whole world. My hope is that that continues and that we can play a role in peaceful solutions to the world’s most difficult conflicts.

Stay safe and take care,

Rob

We have seen horrific scenes of unspeakable violence as Hamas launched its terrorist attacks against the people of Israel, which Canada unequivocally condemns.

What is unfolding in Gaza is a human tragedy. The humanitarian situation facing the Palestinian people – facing Palestinian women and children - is dire. Extremist settlers' attacks continue in the West Bank.

Like all states, Israel has a right to defend itself against terrorist attacks. It has an obligation to do so in accordance with international law.

For even in crisis there are principles. Even in war there are rules.

We must be guided by human dignity – all civilians – Israeli and Palestinian, for they are equal - must be protected.

At this point, Canada mourns seven dead. We are still searching for two, who could be being held hostage.

400 Canadians are trapped in Gaza, they are living in fear and despair. As a government, we have a duty to bring them to safety. And that is why we need humanitarian pauses, a humanitarian truce, in Gaza.

I have been in contact with Qatar, Israel, Egypt and the US every day for the past 3 weeks.

Time is running out. We need an agreement from all parties to get foreign nationals out, including Canadians. To release all hostages. And to allow food, fuel and water into Gaza.

And Canada will be reaching out to more countries to join in that call.

I have spent the better part of this last month in Israel, Jordan, Egypt and the UAE, overseeing our efforts to help Canadians leave the region, and working with our partners to address the impacts of this conflict while finding ways to de-escalate.

The region is at a precarious moment, you can feel the weight of the anxiety and pain in the streets and at the highest levels of government.

While we face the immediate, and urgent, impacts of this crisis, we must also look forward... to the political horizon, and towards peace.

And these conversations - of how we can build a better future, supporting a two-state solution where Israeli and Palestinian civilians can live side-by-side in peace and security, where the Palestinian right of self-determination is respected, are conversations I will never shy away from.

Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright once said that - “contrary to what many people think, international relations is nothing like a game of chess, where two people sit quietly, thinking out their strategy, taking their time between moves.

It is more like a game of billiards, with a bunch of balls clustered together.”

Based on my experience over the last two years, I completely agree.

And I would add that, while it has never been perfect, the game has been served well by a set of common rules ... conceived from the ashes of war to form the basis of global cooperation.

Lines we would not cross to keep our citizens safe. Built on the promise that through stability, would grow prosperity.

MATCHING DONATIONS FOR AID TO GAZA AND WEST BANK

Many people have asked me what they can do to help the people of Gaza and the West Bank. **Our government has announced that we will match donations made to the**

Humanitarian Coalition's Gaza Humanitarian Emergency Appeal.

In addition to the already-announced humanitarian aid in the amount of \$60 million, donations made by individuals to the Humanitarian Coalition retroactively from October 7, 2023 to November 12, 2023 will be matched by the federal government up to a maximum of \$10 million.

There are strong oversight provisions in place to ensure that **none of the donated money goes to Hamas**. The donated funds will provide shelter, emergency food, water, sanitation, health, medical services and child protection.

To learn more or to donate, please click [here](#).

MORE QUESTIONS?

My constituency office is open and my staff are in the office from Monday to Friday during regular business hours. If you wish to make an appointment, please call or email my office.

My staff and I are making every effort to ensure Don Valley West remains a strong and vibrant community. We will continue to respond to your letters, calls and emails.

If you have any concerns, questions, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me at rob.oliphant@parl.gc.ca or call **416-467-7275**. Please also connect with me on **Facebook, Twitter** or **Instagram** by clicking on any of the icons below.

All the best,



You can connect with me on social media by clicking the icons below



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