

Aurora stands with Jewish community at Menorah ceremony, hours after Australia attack



Aurora stood shoulder to shoulder with Jewish people around the world on Sunday as they gathered to light the Menorah just hours after an anti-Semitic attack on Australia's Bondi Beach left 15 dead.

The Town's annual Menorah Lighting Ceremony, once again co-hosted by Chabad Aurora, took place December 14 at Aurora Town Square.

The annual celebration, which is punctuated by music and sweet treats, had added solemnity as the world struggled to understand the circumstances of what unfolded in Australia and it was not far from the minds of the community leaders who gathered to celebrate the first night of Chanukkah.

"Chanukkah is a story of resilience, a reminder that light will always overcome darkness," said Mayor Tom Mrakas, who was invited to light the first candle. "This year, the message carries even greater weight. We've witnessed acts of hatred and violence against Jewish communities around the world, including the horrific terror attack at Bondi Beach. Our hearts are with the victims, their families, and Jewish communities everywhere.

"But let me be very clear: Aurora stands with our Jewish community. We condemn anti-Semitism, terrorism, and hatred in all its forms. We choose unity over division and light over darkness. Lighting the menorah together is more than a tradition; it's a statement of solidarity, strength and hope. Aurora's Jewish community is a vital part of who we are as a Town. Your contributions, leadership, and vibrancy make our community stronger."

These sentiments were echoed by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy who said her heart went out to all the victims in Australia.

"Any anti-Semitic behaviour in this Province will never be tolerated," she said. "In this community of Newmarket-Aurora, it takes leadership ? leadership to set the way, to set the pathway for being an inclusive community where we have safe spaces to be able to worship the way we want to worship?"

"It takes all levels of government ? municipal, provincial, and federal ? to ensure that we always, always will fight for goodness. Let light shine over darkness, especially today on this start of your very, very holy holiday?. As Member of Provincial Parliament for

Newmarket-Aurora, I will always, always have your back and stand against any type of anti-Semitism in our community.?

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill was represented at Sunday's ceremony by MP Costas Menegakis and MPP Michael Parsa.

Menegakis said it was "wonderful to see so many families" in attendance for the celebration, despite the "sadness of the day" "sentiments which were also shared by Parsa.

"I know that it's a difficult day because of what happened in Australia " another senseless act of anti-Semitism" it really affects every single one of us, in every community, and it has to stop. People were there (Bondi Beach) to celebrate their faith. They should not be afraid of posting mezuzahs or wearing their kippahs. This should not happen anymore. It's unacceptable, and it's on all of us " on all levels of government, faith leaders, for all to come together and stop this act. Families still not over the massacres and the terrorist acts of October 7, and now families and those around the world are once again really dealing with the loss of so many people and those that are injured.

"Yes, our thoughts and prayers are with them, but on a day like this, we must also stand to condemn these acts so that they never happen again. I know it is very difficult to say, but I wish all of you a Happy Chanukkah."

With the menorah at the centrepiece of the celebrations, Chabad Aurora's Rabbi Yossi Hecht spoke about the symbolic light that is part and parcel of the occasion, recalling the millennia-old desecration of the Holy Temple and the small jug of oil that miraculously burned for eight days in the aftermath.

"The menorah symbolizes a message of triumph, of freedom over oppression, spirit over matter, and light over darkness," he said. "The light we create, my friends, brings it home, within one's self and one's family. How? By increasing the light of the menorah and the fulfilment of mitzvot, so is the nature of light that when one kindles a light for one's own benefit, it also benefits all who are in the vicinity.

"The Chanukkah lights are expressly meant to illuminate the outside, symbolically alluding to the duty to bring light to the most darkest of places. Tonight, due to the horrific events out of Sydney, each and every one of us individually will add a light. Let us all be the light. Shine your light" we can illuminate the world. Remember, my friends, a little light expels a whole lot of darkness. Let us, together, pray that the message of Chanukkah and the message of Chanukkah lights and the menorah, which we are about to kindle, will illuminate our everyday life and shine beautifully even after the holiday of Chanukkah comes to a close, so that we can be a shining light to our community, to our family, and to the world around us."

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