



Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, M.P.
Beaches-East York

February 22, 2016

Re: Conservative Motion re: BDS Movement

Mr. Clement has introduced a motion designed to divide us. He is trolling.

It is a free vote, and I have given the motion serious consideration. I have read a range of opinions and evidence, listened to the comments of my colleagues in the House of Commons, and consulted the views of my constituents. While not everyone will be pleased with my views set out herein, I thank everyone for participating in our open dialogue on the issue.

Mr. Clement asks us “to condemn any and all attempts...to promote” the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. He has used absolute language, and aims to pit those who support Israel against those who question Israel’s treatment of Palestinians.

There is no question that Israel is a friend and ally to Canada. Surrounded by authoritarian regimes, Israel deserves our respect for its commitment to democracy and the rule of law. Mr. Lametti and Mr. Dion spoke in the House last week regarding the continued importance of our relationship with Israel, and I agree with them.

There is also no question that racism in any form, including anti-semitism, should be condemned.

I condemn those individuals who use the BDS movement as a vehicle for racism and anti-semitism.

I condemn the BDS movement’s supporters who use intimidation tactics, and who undermine a sense of safety for students on campuses across Canada.

I condemn those who single out and discriminate against individuals simply because they are Israeli, regardless of any rational connection to the actions of the State of Israel.

Constituency Office

1902 Danforth Ave
Toronto, ON
M4C 1J4
416 467 0860

House of Commons

802 - Justice Bldg.
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6
613 992 2115



But I cannot condemn “any and all attempts...to promote the BDS movement.”

I cannot condemn the BDS movement’s focus upon companies operating in the West Bank, or upon the expansion of settlements.

Nor can I condemn individuals and groups for exercising their right to free expression to peacefully protest for human rights. This includes members of the United Church of Canada, the American Anthropological Association, the Quakers, student associations, trade unions, and a long list of respected academics.

While criticism of Israel’s actions in relation to Palestinians is not anti-semitism, I have also considered the argument that the BDS movement improperly singles Israel out.

In my view, for the same reasons that we support Israel - its commitment to democracy and the rule of law - we must hold Israel to account for failing to live up to such ideals. We can and should expect more from Israel, just as we can and should expect more from Canada. Democracies, built as they are on the values of equality and human rights, should be held to a higher standard.

However, given the history of the Jewish people, and the history of targeted racism against them, I also appreciate the heightened concern that singling out Israel creates for the Jewish diaspora. I take to heart the Honourable Irwin Cotler’s comments on this subject as well.

I am deeply uncomfortable with the text of this motion, as it seeks to divide Canadians, and to force us to choose a side: we are either for or against Israel; for or against the BDS movement.

I refuse to participate in such a simplified narrative. I stand for a two-state solution just as I stand for peace, and I don’t believe that this motion furthers these important goals.

Sincerely,

Constituency Office
1902 Danforth Ave
Toronto, ON
M4C 1J4
416 467 0860

House of Commons
802 - Justice Bldg.
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6
613 992 2115

Nathaniel.Erskine-Smith@parl.gc.ca



Nathaniel Erskine-Smith

Constituency Office

1902 Danforth Ave
Toronto, ON
M4C 1J4
416 467 0860

House of Commons

802 - Justice Bldg.
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6
613 992 2115

Nathaniel.Erskine-Smith@parl.gc.ca