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Mr. Anthony Housefather, MP
Chair
House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Via e-mail: just@parl.gc.ca

Dear Mr. Chair,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit a brief for consideration as part of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights' ongoing study on online hate. My colleagues and I have worked extensively on matters of racism and religious discrimination in Canada throughout this Parliament.

Firstly, a discussion on the prevalence of online hate should not be predicated on the issue of whether individuals simply disagree on matters of debate. I strongly support the right to freedom of expression, unless there is an element of violence or physical threat that is part of the message. That is why I was one of the strongest supporters of the move to remove Section 13 hate speech provisions from the federal Human Rights Act. Legitimate opinion must be allowed to have its place whether everyone agrees with it or not. In Canada, we should be able to agree that when threats of violence are made, that exchange – whether online or in the material world – enters the realm of the Criminal Code.

A solution to online hate should not just be based on regulating online content. Alternatively, a more comprehensive solution would be to require individuals to identify themselves in online fora. It is the anonymization of online activity that has allowed for the proliferation of unacceptable content.

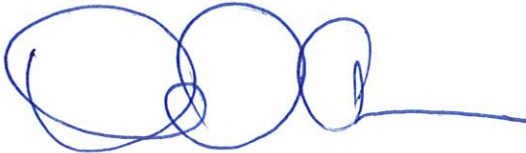
Conservatives have done a considerable amount of work dealing with issues of religious hatred and the manipulation of language by special interest groups. For the consideration of the Committee, I would like to submit a document that we believe will be important to your discussions – the dissenting opinion of the Conservative Party of Canada to the report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage on systemic racism and religious discrimination.

As the dissenting opinion notes, while government cannot and should not provide the solution to hate and discrimination in this country, well-informed Canadians have the power to do so. Government censorship has never delivered a positive result in this regard. In fact, our dissenting opinion makes reference to the need for a “whole-of-Canada” approach to racism and religious discrimination, as opposed to a whole-of-government approach.

In a “whole of Canada” approach, government works to foster increased inter-community, intra-community, interfaith, and intrafaith dialogue – empowering religious and cultural communities to find solutions to racial and religious discrimination.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to this important study.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several large, overlapping loops and a long horizontal tail stroke extending to the right.

David Anderson, MP
Cypress Hills – Grasslands