

Vandals spray paint anti-Semitic words on the Beth Israel Synagogue in west Edmonton

By [Trevor Robb](#), *Edmonton Sun*
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Vandals paint hate message on the walls of Beth Israel Synagogue in Edmonton, Alberta on Tuesday Jan.20, 2015. Perry Mah/Edmonton Sun/QMI Agency

The city police hate crimes unit is investigating after vandals tagged a west Edmonton synagogue over the weekend spray painting the words, "Leave Caanada" and other anti-Semitic remarks on the side of the building.

"There's no reason for this," said Marvin Abugov, a former board chair member at the Beth Israel Synagogue, 131 Wolf Willow Rd NW, where the vandalism occurred. "We really don't understand what causes people to do these things, and it's not just us it's mosques and anyone else these crazed people decide they want to attack."

This isn't the first time the synagogue has been targeted.

When it opened in 2001, the synagogue was fire-bombed with two Molotov cocktails just hours after an Edmonton-Palestinian man threw a Molotov cocktail inside the Beth Shalom synagogue, 11916 Jasper Ave., on Halloween night.

Abugov says the Beth Israel synagogue has also seen several incidents of rocks being thrown through the windows.

"It's not nothing new, but it's always extremely disconcerting to the community," said Abugov, who now serves as the co-chair of the Phoenix Multi-Faith Society for Harmony, an Edmonton based inter-faith organization whose membership includes representatives from the Abrahamic faiths of Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

The frequency of these kinds of attacks has people on edge.

"They (the attacks) are on the fringe, but at our synagogue and at the Beth Shalom, security is always top of mind, and we work very hard to ensure that our members are looked after that way," said Abugov. "Anytime this happens, regardless of who's doing it or why, it's not a good situation.

"But we are interacting and doing as much as a community can to deal with these things, and doing it in a responsible way."

On Tuesday, Edmonton-Sherwood Park MP and Minister of State (Multiculturalism), Tim Uppal -- who says he has a "close, personal connection" to the congregation at Beth Israel -- took to Facebook to blast the attacks.

"I condemn this cowardly anti-Semitic act of vandalism in the strongest sense," wrote Uppal. "From Confederation to today, Canadians from all different backgrounds, cultures and religions have contributed to shaping our great country.

"I call on Canadians to firmly reject this and any other despicable expressions of hatred against Canadians of any faith or cultural background."

This recent incident comes just over week after the Sri Guru Singh Sabha gurdwara, at 4504 Mill Woods Road South, which was hit by graffiti with racist slurs and words spray painted saying "leave Canada."

In October 2014, both front windows of the Cold Lake Mosque were broken and the words "go home" and "Canada" were spray-painted in red on the outside of the building.

The day after, members of the community banded together to paint over the vandalism and gathered posters, flowers and gifts and displayed them by the windows that were smashed.