

Menorah lighting ceremony at city hall marks the start of Hanukkah

The ceremony was led by Rabbi Chaim Boyarsky, who said the menorah's job is to 'bring light to a world that went dark.'

Catherine Morrison

Published Dec 25, 2024 • Last updated Dec 26, 2024



Dozens of people gathered outside of city hall on the afternoon of Dec. 25 to light a menorah and celebrate the first night of Hanukkah. PHOTO BY CATHERINE MORRISON /Postmedia

Dozens of people gathered outside of city hall on the afternoon of Dec. 25 to light a menorah and celebrate the first night of Hanukkah.

Held by the Rohr Chabad Student Network of Ottawa, the event also marked 50 years since the first public menorah was lit at the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia in 1974.

The ceremony was led by Rabbi Chaim Boyarsky, who said the menorah's job was to "bring light to a world that went dark."

"We know today there's so much hatred and people are trying to shy away from standing loud and proud for their Jewishness," said Boyarsky, who spoke in his speech about the "atrocities" of Oct. 7, 2023, also sharing a story of a boy who was kidnapped by terrorists, but escaped. "The menorah is a symbol of Jewish pride to stand loud and proud for the Jewish people."

Attendees chatted and ate donuts in front of the lit menorah, while many other people used their holiday Wednesday to skate on the Rink of Dreams next to city hall.



Ottawa city Coun. Stéphanie Plante lighting the menorah. PHOTO BY CATHERINE MORRISON /Postmedia

Rideau-Vanier Coun. Stéphanie Plante lit the 12-foot menorah and told the crowd that, while things “have been difficult,” they had allies, including herself.

“It’s important for me around the holiday season to kind of try to touch base with every group I can,” Plante said before the ceremony. “I have a very diverse ward.”

Boyarsky said that, even when there was darkness, “we have to be the menorah.”

“We have to be the light to always defend values of freedom, of prosperity, of Jewishness and be inclusive,” Boyarsky said.

An eight-day holiday, Hanukkah began on the same day as Christmas this year for the first time since 2005. According to a news release from the Finkelstein Chabad Jewish Centre, Ottawa’s menorah is “one of over 15,000 large public menorahs throughout the world, including notable menorahs in front of the White House, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, the Great Wall of China, and Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate.”



Dozens of people gathered outside of city hall on the afternoon of Dec. 25 to light a menorah and celebrate the first night of Hanukkah. PHOTO BY CATHERINE MORRISON /Postmedia



Ottawa city councillors Stéphanie Plante and David Hill with Rabbi Chaim Boyarsky. PHOTO BY CATHERINE MORRISON /Postmedia



Ottawa city Coun. Stéphanie Plante taking a selfie with attendees. PHOTO BY CATHERINE MORRISON /Postmedia