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January 10, 2019

Hon. Lisa MacLeod  
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services,  
Minister Responsible for Women's Issues  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor, 80 Grosvenor St.  
Toronto, ON  
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Dear Minister MacLeod,

Earlier this week in our community of Davenport, a 35-year old woman named Crystal died after becoming trapped in the chute of a clothing donation box, while trying to find warm clothes on a cold night.

At least seven Canadians have died in similar incidents since 2015, two here in Ontario. While there are clearly safety concerns with these donation bins, the roots of this tragedy lies not only in the mechanics of the bins, but in the poverty that has contributed to the death of so many of our fellow Ontarians.

**On behalf of our Davenport community, I am calling on your government to take immediate action to remove barriers that are keeping people trapped in poverty.**

I also want to encourage you to reflect on the actions this government has taken to “cut back,” and on the impact those cuts have on the most vulnerable people in the province. Scrapping rent control, reducing planned social assistance rate increases, narrowing the eligibility for the Ontario Disability Support Program and ending the Basic Income pilot before the results of the study could even be known, are taking matters from bad to worse.

Until Ontario moves towards a fairer model of social assistance, reinvests in social and affordable housing and raises wages, people will continue to be burdened with the anxieties of finding shelter, coping with harsh and extreme weather conditions, and simply trying to survive.

In Davenport, many organizations are working tirelessly to fill the gap in areas the government has failed. Organizations like Sistering, an agency that provides shelter for at-risk women who are homeless or precariously housed. For years, they have been delivering vital services and transforming the lives of many, while working in an overloaded capacity with limited resources. Crystal was a part of the Sistering community.

With shelters packed, more people risk freezing to death in the remaining winter months. Between January 1 and March 31, last year, Toronto Public Health reported on average 1.8 deaths per week among people experiencing homelessness – that is simply unacceptable.

Each death like Crystal's is a reminder that the provincial government has failed its most vulnerable. This is not just a process of modifying bins for improved safety – although I would urge that this be addressed urgently -- it is about making sure the supports people need are there when and where they need them.

I urge you to reverse course on your recent changes to social assistance and ODSP, provide badly needed funding for new shelters and housing, and to use the power of your office to make sure we never again have to mourn the loss of another sister to extreme poverty.

Sincerely,



**Marit Stiles**  
**MPP for Davenport**

cc: Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Hon. Steve Clark  
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cc: MPP Rima Berns-McGown  
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