



# PEEL REGIONAL LABOUR COUNCIL

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The Peel Regional Labour Council (PRLC) was deeply concerned when we heard what happened in Hamilton, Ontario at the end of November. We are shocked about the egregious use of force against racialized youth in order to cleanse the homeless population from the city. As workers and residents of Peel, we understand the terrible impact that policing can have in the absence of adequate housing solutions and other social supports. Disproportionately, the most marginalized communities and their advocates are the victims.

A housing crisis, COVID-19, chronic and systemic underfunding for social services, has created a perfect storm to cause a spike in homelessness and lack of shelter spaces. Here in Peel Region, tenant organizers, like ACORN and others are constantly fighting back against abusive landlords, neglected properties, and this increasingly worsening housing crisis. These organizers have even had some victories in Mississauga with a *Rent Safe* campaign, a campaign that the PRLC supports, which had Mississauga City Council unanimously endorse to better protect tenants.

In Hamilton, instead of rising to the occasion and figuring out a strategy to provide housing both immediate and long term, their city officials look to the police as the only tool in the toolbox. In effect, Hamilton officials are using the police as a tool to cleanse the city of the unhoused, not by providing them with housing, but just to remove them from the city and send them to the wilderness. We all need to ask, “How did we get to this point?”.

When community members ask that Hamilton city officials provide actual solutions, the response is not to listen, but violence. The conduct of the Hamilton Police Services is not only outrageous but should offend the sensibilities of all Canadians. These evictions are an affront to basic human dignity and rights. The arrest and charges towards housing, disability justice, and community advocate, Sarah Jama, on November 26th is outrageous. Sarah has been at the forefront of addressing issues facing the Hamilton community, her arrest is an arrest of all of us. It is the arrest of anyone in this country whose heart is moved by injustice.

Alone, this incident is troubling, but it was followed up with brutal, violent arrest of more racialized youth who protested Sarah’s criminalization on the 26th. We unite with countless civil organizations across Hamilton and Ontario who have been responding with shock and anger that their police services could stoop to such heinous lows.

We call on all **President’s of Unions and all Labour Affiliates and Delegates** to unite in solidarity against this egregious attack on these community housing advocates.

We call for all charges of the housing advocates to be dropped immediately and that a formal public apology by the Hamilton Police Services be given to those arrested and evicted by their service.

We support the call to open a judicial inquiry into the violent events at JC Beemer Park on November 24th and the Hamilton Police Central Station on November 26th.

If you can support, there has been a legal defense fund set up to support the community advocates against the unjust charges.

In Solidarity,

Peel Regional Labour Council