



TORONTO TRAGEDY AND OUR SHARED HUMANITY

Torontonians are joined by people from across Canada shocked at the horrific events on Yonge Street on Monday April 23rd. The senseless deaths of ten people on Toronto's main street strikes at the core of our shared belief that we live in a safe and diverse city. Words cannot describe how painful this is for the victims' families and loved ones. Our thoughts go out to them, those who witnessed the events, and the city's first responders. We express our gratitude to the public and the public servants who rushed to assist the victims, and to the courageous officer who subdued the attacker.

Some of the victims were union members. Renuka Amarasinghe, CUPE 4400 member, was killed leaving work at Earl Haig Secondary School to pick up her son. Among the injured were CUPE 3904 member and Chief Steward, Amir Kiumarsi, a chemistry teacher at Ryerson University, and CUPE 79 member Amaresh Tesfamariam, a registered practical nurse at Fudger House. Other victims included a retired grandmother, workers on their lunch break, and visitors from Korea.

There is much speculation as to the motive of the man who drove the van into groups of pedestrians for almost two kilometres of Yonge Street south of Finch. The alleged attacker had praised a mass murderer in the United States who was part of the "incel" movement – a social media-based network of "involuntarily celibate" men who hate women. Quebec mosque murderer Alexandre Bissonnette also researched the same group shortly before his actions a year ago. It is clear that the stoking of hate and intolerance that is integral to the political culture of the right in the U.S. and Canada has very real and deadly consequences.

There were initial and unconfirmed reports that the perpetrator was Middle Eastern. That speaks to the fragile nature of our shared reality, where in some cases the perpetrators are inspired by the Daesh terrorist group, while in others the killers are white supremacists, misogynists or ultra-conservative zealots. All deserve condemnation, but experience has shown a tremendous bias in media coverage and blame, a hallmark of attitude of the current U.S. President.

There is universal admiration for the conduct of Police Constable Ken Lam, who instead of being goaded into shooting, utilized de-escalation techniques to subdue the perpetrator. The contrast between Lam's fearless handling of Alek Minassian and the fate of Sammy Yatim, Andrew Loku and many others should be acknowledged. His actions should be held up as the standard for

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such confrontations – a key element of community policing that reflects the best levels of professionalism our city deserves.

Torontonians share a common goal of building a better life for our families, regardless of where we have come from. We know that creating a caring and welcoming place – Canada’s largest urban centre - is a labour of love that cannot be deterred by any one setback. We ask that all of us, in our own way, reach out to those we love and those we don’t yet know. Let us continue our journey together, shaping the future of this city guided by an unwavering commitment to friendship and solidarity.

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