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Press Release

Racism never takes a pause – re-open the Centre

For immediate release

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Hamiltonians from a broad coalition of individuals and agencies have developed and endorsed recommendations to re-open Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre (HARRC) as an autonomous “community based entity” with its own board of directors.

These recommendations are sensible and do-able in ensuring the success of HARRC. The recommendations and endorsement list that are attached are being shared with the City and at the community consultation on October 29th.

The community’s voice must drive this initiative – Pauline Kajirua.

Building on the foundation of the community’s 2004 Report on the Symposium on the Reality of Anti-racism work reports the need to have “a resource centre devoted to anti-racism research, education and training be created to operate in Hamilton.

Together we can challenge racism and hate in our city.

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Recommendations for funders re: HARRC

On February 14th, 2019, the 3-year Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre (HARRC), which was designed to address racism and hate crimes in Hamilton, was put on 'pause' less than a year into its mandate. The sudden closure – without any public consultation – was disconcerting as racism in Hamilton has definitely not been paused, as hatemongers grow shriller in their vile work, and as Hamilton continues to lead the country in the number of reported hate crimes.

While the news release indicated that this “pause” could be up to a 12-months interruption, there were few details to explain why this was deemed necessary, other than vague references to the need of community consultations because the number of cases reported were deemed to be too low by the Oversight Committee. This project involved two community-based committees: The City of Hamilton Committee Against Racism (CAR) and the HARRC Steering Committee. Neither committee was consulted prior to the 'pause'. We believe the City's actions not only show a disregard to these two groups but also poor judgement and lack of respect.

The Oversight Committee is the entity in the City's initial press release that said the case numbers were too low. From our numerous discussions on this point with CAR members and, most importantly, with people from racialized communities around this city, they have not felt the same sentiment. The resounding comment they have made independent of each other, yet collectively, has been, "One report of racism is one too many".

Blatant acts of racism and hate in Hamilton have increased. Our City needs HARRC, with guarantees that it will not be paused again.

On April 4th, 2018, HARRC officially launched its services to the City of Hamilton. It was introduced as a three-year pilot project meant to offer support, referrals, and resources to individuals experiencing racism. The launch was met with excitement and much anticipation from stakeholders, partners, and most importantly, the residents of Hamilton. Not only was the launch a celebratory moment after several decades of tireless efforts to implement a resource Centre, it instilled a sense of hope among community members and victims of racism and hate.

This hope was driven by the belief that concerns regarding racism and hate crimes would finally be heard and dealt with appropriately. It also projected hope because the initiative was supported by powerful, dedicated, community stakeholders who had endeavored to take concrete steps to tackle racism and hate; who experience racism and hate crimes (past and

present) and know far too well the impact racism and hate have in the City of Hamilton. These are stakeholders who need a fulsome response in a timely and effective manner.

Although we were told that an insufficient number of people used the services, during the course of HARRC's nine months in operation, 73 brave Hamiltonians came forward to reveal and share their personal, heartfelt experiences of racism and hate occurring right here in this City. We view this as a significant number of people with the courage to come forward and share their difficult stories of trauma believing that participation would lead to change. By halting the process, the City is neglecting its duty and accountability to these individuals as the pause provokes legitimate concerns about transparency and questions about the City's genuine commitment to addressing racism and hate.

There's no need to re-invent the wheel. The community formulated recommendations set out in the 2004 "Report on the Symposium on the Reality of Anti-racism Work in Hamilton" are still relevant and we urge you to consider them in concert with the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Salient Issues

- a. We acknowledge and commend the contribution of the funding partners in implementing this initiative. It is essential to honour the work of the community and ensure that HARRC becomes an autonomous, community-based entity with its own board of directors.
- b. Ensure sufficient funding so that proper structures, processes, financial management (including the capacity to fundraise) and partnerships are in place to enable HARRC to reliably fulfill its mandate.
- c. Engage the community to ensure that HARRC's work draws from the benefit of the decades of experience in Hamilton.
- d. Ensure permanent funding, with built in reviews and annual reports.
- e. Acquire a location for HARRC that is safe, accessible (both by HSR and for people who have disabilities), and is welcoming to all Hamiltonians.
- f. Prioritize the re-opening of HARRC.

Positioning HARRC for Success

- a. Embed comprehensive principles and framework of anti-oppression and anti-racism in the establishment and operation of HARRC.
- b. Finance HARRC to enable it to support 'best practice' standards, community oversight, appropriate office space, staffing levels and service delivery.

- c. Consider satellite locations that rotate, including at existing agencies, faith communities, etc.
- d. Promote community awareness of HARRC, the services it provides, and where to access its services.
- e. Commit to an administrative position to support HARRC staff.

Excellence in Human Resources

- a. Employ extensive processes for recruitment, hiring and attention to retention that take into account, but are not limited to, management skills, lived experience of racism and hate crimes, communication skills, ability to engage various communities, experience working with volunteers.
- b. Implement best practices for all HR matters that include a job description, duties and responsibilities, clear lines of communication, clear/consistent reporting lines, regular evaluation and feedback, etc.

CONCLUSION

We submit these recommendations to REAFFIRM and RESUME operations of Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre and send a powerful message about Hamilton's commitment to anti-racism and to quell hate crimes.

HARRC Recommendations endorsement

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1.	Anne Patenaude-Dlugosz	annepatenaudedlugosz@gmail.com	Board of Director HCLC
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