

C89.
Communication
CW(2) – June 18, 2024
Item No. 23

From: Clerks@vaughan.ca
To: [Assunta Ferrante](mailto:Assunta.Ferrante)
Subject: FW: [External] Communication from OPSEU/SEFPO President
Date: Monday, June 17, 2024 1:27:50 PM

From: OPSEU/SEFPO President's Office <PresidentsOffice@opseu.org>
Sent: Monday, June 17, 2024 1:21 PM
To: Clerks@vaughan.ca
Subject: [External] Communication from OPSEU/SEFPO President

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Dear Mayor Del Duca and Members of Vaughan City Council:

On behalf of 180,000 OPSEU/SEFPO members, I write today to voice strong opposition to the “Protecting Vulnerable Social Infrastructure By law” that is coming before you today. Please do not fall for the rhetoric that this bylaw is about protecting vulnerable communities. Canada already has legislation in place that addresses community safety, hate speech and violence; that is not what is being discussed here. What is at stake here is simply the right to voice dissenting opinions within reach of certain locations.

OPSEU/SEFPO members work at a number of such locations and our right to gather and express ourselves there – perhaps especially when as workers, we want our voices to be heard, whether it is during a strike or whether it is when we are taking political action – is a fundamental right that we have been guaranteed through multiple legal challenges that have been heard at the Supreme Court of Canada. Calling it a “protest” does not change the essential nature of these activities.

Bylaws such as these seek to restrict broad rights based on narrow or temporary circumstances that some Councillors or their constituents do not like. A \$100,000 fine for the violation of such a by-law lays bare the draconian intent to stifle free expression that underlies bylaws and motions like this, which do indeed attempt to set aside Charter-protected rights to freedom of assembly and expression. But the reason these protections exist in a democracy in the first place is precisely so that speech or activities that are not popular do not get restricted.

As Councillors, I ask you to remember that there are many residents in your communities who hold many and diverse views. Your primary task should be ensuring that you hear from as many voices as possible so that you have all the information you need to make the best decisions possible for all of the people who call Vaughan home, not to try to restrict the voices

you hear to those who agree with you.

On behalf of OPSEU/SEFPO, I urge you all to vote against this proposed Bylaw and put an end to the notion that “protest” can or should be restricted. In a free and democratic society, peaceful protest that respects human rights and differences actually make for stronger communities.

Sincerely,

JP Hornick (they/them)
OPSEU/SEFPO President