



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Toronto cleaners call on City Councillors to defend good jobs, ensure transparency

Toronto, ON – Hundreds of City cleaners' jobs may be contracted out and turned into poverty-wage jobs without a chance for City Councillors to weigh in and vote on the issue. The cleaners at the Toronto Police Service are the first group under attack.

"It doesn't make sense that Rob Ford wants to put more people in poverty when there are already too many poverty wage jobs in our communities," said Rajasingham Jayanthirasa, a part-time City of Toronto cleaner.

Jayanthirasa joined other cleaners today at a news conference to launch the Justice and Dignity for Cleaners campaign. The campaign has been organized by Good Jobs for All, a community-labour coalition.

"Just because you don't see us, doesn't mean we aren't there," said Trish O'Brien, a Toronto Police station cleaner. She stated that the proposed job cuts would put cleaners at risk. Every day, O'Brien and her colleagues handle hazardous material such as HIV-infected blood, feces and vermin in the course of their cleaning duties. "At my job, I'm given proper training and equipment to handle each of these risks. Is a private contractor going to do that?" she asked.

Julio Silva, a former contract cleaner who worked at five different private cleaning companies over the past decade, doubts it. "I never received any training or even basic safety equipment like gloves," he said.

"Good Jobs are vital to the health of our city," said Winnie Ng, co-chair of the Good Jobs for All. "If these jobs are cut and handed over to private contractors who pay poverty wages, the loss of income will affect entire communities including local businesses," she said.

"Many cleaners are new immigrants or single mothers and it sends the wrong message to target vulnerable groups in our society," added Ng. The coalition is calling upon City Councillors to defend City jobs that pay a living wage. In the coming weeks, Ng and City cleaners will be meeting with Councillors to ask them to vote on all proposed job cuts instead of having City managers make the decisions behind closed doors.

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For further information:

Preethy Sivakumar – 416 937 9378
Coordinator, Good Jobs for All
Organizer, Justice & Dignity for Cleaners campaign

Kevin Wilson – 416 821 6641
Communications, Good Jobs for All