



**UNITE HERE Local 75**

15 Gervais Drive, Suite 300, Toronto, ON M3C 1Y8

**Guled Warsame, President | Shelli Sareen, Secretary-Treasurer | Valrie Lue, Vice-President**

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March 26, 2020

**To:** Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

**Copies:**

Andrea Horwath, leader of the opposition

Hon. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health

James Wallace, Chief of Staff to the Premier

Hon. Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance

Mayor John Tory

Councillor Joe Cressy, Chair, Toronto Public Health

**Dear Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario:**

We are writing to call your attention to the urgent concerns of hotels and hospitality workers in the region, who have been and remain on the front lines of the COVID 19 crisis.

UNITE HERE Local 75 represents over 8,000 hotel and hospitality workers across the Greater Toronto Area. Hospitality workers are among the first and worst hit by the COVID-19 crisis – as travel stopped and schools shuttered, close to 90% of our membership has been laid off. For those who remain on the job, our work – cleaning rooms and public places, cooking and serving food, welcoming guests – puts us in daily contact with the public and in areas with very high risk of viral transmission. Many of our members work for less than \$20 an hour, in a city where the cost of living is very high.

To make matters worse, workers in our industry were already struggling; January through March is a slow season for tourism and hospitality. Hospitality workers are accustomed tightening their belts in late winter, and looking forward spring, typically a busy season from business conferences and sports championships, as well as robust late spring and summer tourism. Instead, our income from hourly wages, tips, and gratuity have all dried up.

We know of your commitment as well as the commitment of all levels of governments to ensure that hospitality workers, and all Canadian workers, can continue to live and pay our bills. With rent, mortgages and utility bills coming due many of our members are going to need work or financial support, with increasing desperation.

Furthermore, as the caseload continues to rise, we anticipate public health officials looking to our unionized hotels to host hospital & quarantine overflow. We believe these facilities give the government an opportunity not only to save lives, but also to support the continued employment of people who are most impacted by the economic crisis. Our skilled union workforce knows how

**Organize Here. Win Here. UNITE HERE!**

**T: 416-384-0983 | Fax: 416-384-0991 | [www.uniteherelocal75.org](http://www.uniteherelocal75.org) | [info@uniteherelocal75.org](mailto:info@uniteherelocal75.org)**

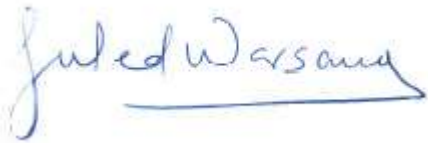
to operate these hotels, and we urge the Health Department to consider the following principles as they explore these options:

- Expect companies to participate in such a program as part of their civic duty rather than expect to maximize profits, and to respect and pay their employees fairly, adhere to legislation to the highest standards, and protect workers' health and safety.
- Existing hotel staff should be given first right of refusal of work they typically perform, but should not be penalized for declining such work that could put their health at risk.
- The Government must fund and supply additional staff and training for existing workers in a timely manner.
- Hotel staff asked to be front-line crisis workers should be compensated accordingly.

We kindly request a meeting with members of your administration to review how we can continue to place health and safety of hospitality workers at the center of your plans to fight this pandemic.

Our union and our members want to respond to your call for Ontarians to step up and support our fight against this pandemic and we believe we are up for that challenge

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Guled Warsame". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a horizontal line.

Guled Warsame President UNITE HERE Local 75

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Shelli Sareen". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Shelli Sareen Secretary-Treasurer UNITE HERE Local 75

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Valrie Lue". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Valrie Lue Vice-President UNITE HERE Local 75