



**Coalition of Racialized Workers Statement of Solidarity with
Sister Annette Bouzi and all Black, Indigenous and Racialized Workers**

May 13, 2021

To OPSEU/SEFPO Executive Board

The President's Office has repeatedly indicated that it will not shy away from difficult conversations, they are actively engaged in efforts to dismantle Anti-Black and other forms of racism within the union and the workplace. For years, the Coalition has been shedding light on racial inequities within OPSEU/SEFPO and the respective workplaces it represents, while calling on the President's Office, locals and regional committees to do more. The Coalition has asked them to change the way that decisions are made and how policies are applied, that have been proven to disproportionately negatively affect Racialized members. The Coalition continues to be committed and dedicated in helping OPSEU/SEFPO take a major step forward to transition into a more diverse and inclusive space. We believe providing recommendations for education, training and engaging in difficult conversations is still needed.

The Coalition is very concerned about the statements that have been made over the last two weeks with respect to the CBC article published accusing union Executives at Algonquin College of being racist and sexist. The Coalition feels that the comparisons made on hiring Racialized/Black employees and real time racial/systemic discrimination complaints are not relevant but rather offensive and divisive. This was an opportunity for OPSEU/SEFPO to condemn these actions and stand in solidarity to support a member who was victimized so that others in similar situations would know that our union has a zero tolerance for discrimination and is serious about dismantling Systemic Racism in all forms.

OPSEU/SEFPO needs to do better as an organization to eradicate all forms of white supremacy, intimidation and bullying tactics found within our political structure. Harassment and Discrimination has no place in our union or workplaces, we need real-time and relevant solutions in order to move our union forward. This time has to be different; the broken record of change has been heard before. We all recognize that this is a time for change and the Coalition believes that OPSEU/SEFPO is committed to working towards a new beginning and a fresh start that will support the diverse needs of our organization.

Sister Annette Bouzi represents this change; she represents determination, leadership and inclusivity. Her efforts and hard work should be celebrated, supported and encouraged, not ridiculed and excluded. Sister Annette Bouzi is the face of the future and should be embraced. The Coalition supports her tenacity and resiliency in the face of this atrocity and stands in solidarity with her as she navigates through this extremely difficult situation.

The Coalition believes we have helped generate data to address the specific needs required in the fight to dismantle all systemic barriers currently impacting Racialized workers. We welcome the opportunity to continue working directly with OPSEU/SEFPO in this regard and we are open to ongoing conversations on how to implement recommendations that support this change. We urge the Leadership to use this opportunity to create real change and help dismantle the racist structures that stand in the way of equity, diversity and inclusion. The Coalition of Racialized Workers stands in solidarity with Sister Annette Bouzi, President of OPSEU Local 415, and all Black, Indigenous and Racialized workers.



We are tired of statements that lack accountability and direct action from OPSEU/SEFPO. We are tired of the performative and colonialist acts within our union that uphold white supremacy. We are tired of asking permission from our union to be treated with dignity and respect.

As James Baldwin said, “How much time do you want for your progress?” and we are saying that such time for progress has run out, we demand such change now.

The Coalition of Racialized Workers is done waiting for racial justice from our union and we demand:

1. An open apology to Sister Bouzi from President Thomas for the acts of racism and sexism that she has been subjected to, at the hands of OPSEU/SEFPO, under his leadership, which have already been substantiated by the union’s own investigation.
2. That all OPSEU/SEFPO member-harassers in Local 415 be immediately removed from all their union duties, so that OPSEU/SEFPO and its Local 415 can become a safer space for Black women and all historically marginalized people.
3. That all OPSEU/SEFPO staff involved in condoning the mistreatment of Sister Bouzi be held accountable for upholding white supremacy and patriarchy.
4. That OPSEU/SEFPO immediately implement all Recommendations the Coalition of Racialized Workers made in its Strategic Plan from 2018 and after the 2020 Anti-Black Racism On-line Tele-town Hall.
5. That OPSEU/SEFPO track data on all racial discrimination grievances so that the union can identify where improved member support is needed.
6. That OPSEU/SEFPO reconstruct its Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy, with input from survivors of racial discrimination and harassment, so that the policy becomes survivor-centred, non-political, and grants the needed authority to the Equity Unit to enforce its decisions.
7. That OPSEU/SEFPO implement pro-active measures to remove barriers to participation in union leadership for its Black and Racialized union members.
8. That OPSEU/SEFPO report every 6 months on the progress of these demands so that it remains accountable to the membership.
9. That OPSEU/SEFPO hire an Anti-Black racism advisor.
10. That OPSEU/SEFPO work with two members of the Coalition to ensure that these Demands are upheld.