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Contact: Jorge Villatoro
647-640-3481
jvillatoro@seiulocal2.ca

MEDIA RELEASE

Janitors and Community Allies, including Local MPPs and Federal NDP Candidate, Rally in Front of Downtown Toronto Condo

Condominium Board of Directors urged to direct cleaning contractor back to negotiation table, after it locked out janitors for refusing drastic concessions

Toronto, Ontario – Close to 40 community allies, including three local NDP MPPs and a federal candidate, rallied around the janitors who clean the Icon Condominium towers at 250 and 270 Wellington Street West this morning in Toronto. They are demanding Luciano Janitorial Services end the lockout and negotiate a fair deal. Five janitors were locked out nearly three weeks ago after rejecting the company's concession laden offer; accepting it would have been a clear step backwards for the cleaners.

"He is demanding we give away things we need," says Villamor Castaneto, who has been working at the building for seven years. "Right now, all we want is for our employer to come back to negotiate so we can keep working and find a fair deal."

Chris Glover, MPP, Spadina-Fort York, the riding where the condo is located, was there to show his support for the cleaners. He expressed his concern with the workers' situation.

"I spoke with one worker this morning who's been locked out," said Glover. "She's making \$14.50 an hour and is being asked to pay an additional \$750 a year for her benefits while her wages are frozen for this year. If they're not paying their workers enough for them to afford food, shelter and clothing, then in essence, they're asking the government to subsidize their business."

"With growing precarious employment in Toronto, it is critical we have a federal government that will protect and improve workers' rights," said federal NDP candidate for Spadina-Fort York, Diana Yoon. "Janitors, in our downtown high-rise communities, provide invaluable work to our community but are not getting the respect and rights they deserve. That's why I fully support justice for janitors at 250/270 Wellington St. West."



2600 Skymark Ave. Bldg 2, Suite 200 Mississauga, ON L4W 5B2 1-800-663-6841 · 905-602-7477 Fax 905-602-7476	572 Arthur St. W. P.O. Box 32001 Thunder Bay, ON P7E 0A1 888-887-5343 · 807-473-9651 Fax 807-473-3632	303 Waverley St W Ottawa, ON K2P 0V9 613-567-3528 Fax 613-567-0924	7128 Gilley Avenue Burnaby, BC V5J 4X2 604-540-7774 Fax 604-540-7779	163 Wyse Road, Lower Level Dartmouth, NS B3A 1M5 902-455-1095 Fax 902-455-1855
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The other elected leaders present were, Faisal Hassan, MPP, York-South Weston and Bhutila Karpoche, MPP, Parkdale-High Park, the latter delivering a fiery speech denouncing the rising cost of living in Toronto and the low-wages workers are forced to survive on.

Luciano Janitorial Services has not only demanded concessions but has also rejected all improvements proposed by the cleaners.

The cleaning company, who took over the janitorial contract at the condo a year ago, wants workers like Emma Llanes to give up two out of her four sick days and increase her monthly benefit contributions from the 20 per cent employees currently pay to 70 per cent. The workers say they can't afford it, especially on the wages they currently make.

"With the modest health benefits we get I can buy medication for my high blood pressure," says Llanes, who has worked at the condo for six years. "Without those benefits, I will really struggle to get my medicine."

Luciano Janitorial Services is offering a pay increase that will keep workers below the poverty line; a total of only 30 cents spread over three years. The workers currently make \$14.50 per hour or \$15.25 per hour, depending on their job classification. The standard set by the recently negotiated city-wide janitorial agreements is \$1.20 raise over three years. Other cleaners in the city were also able to win the start of a pension plan while Luciano Janitorial Services has also rejected it.

